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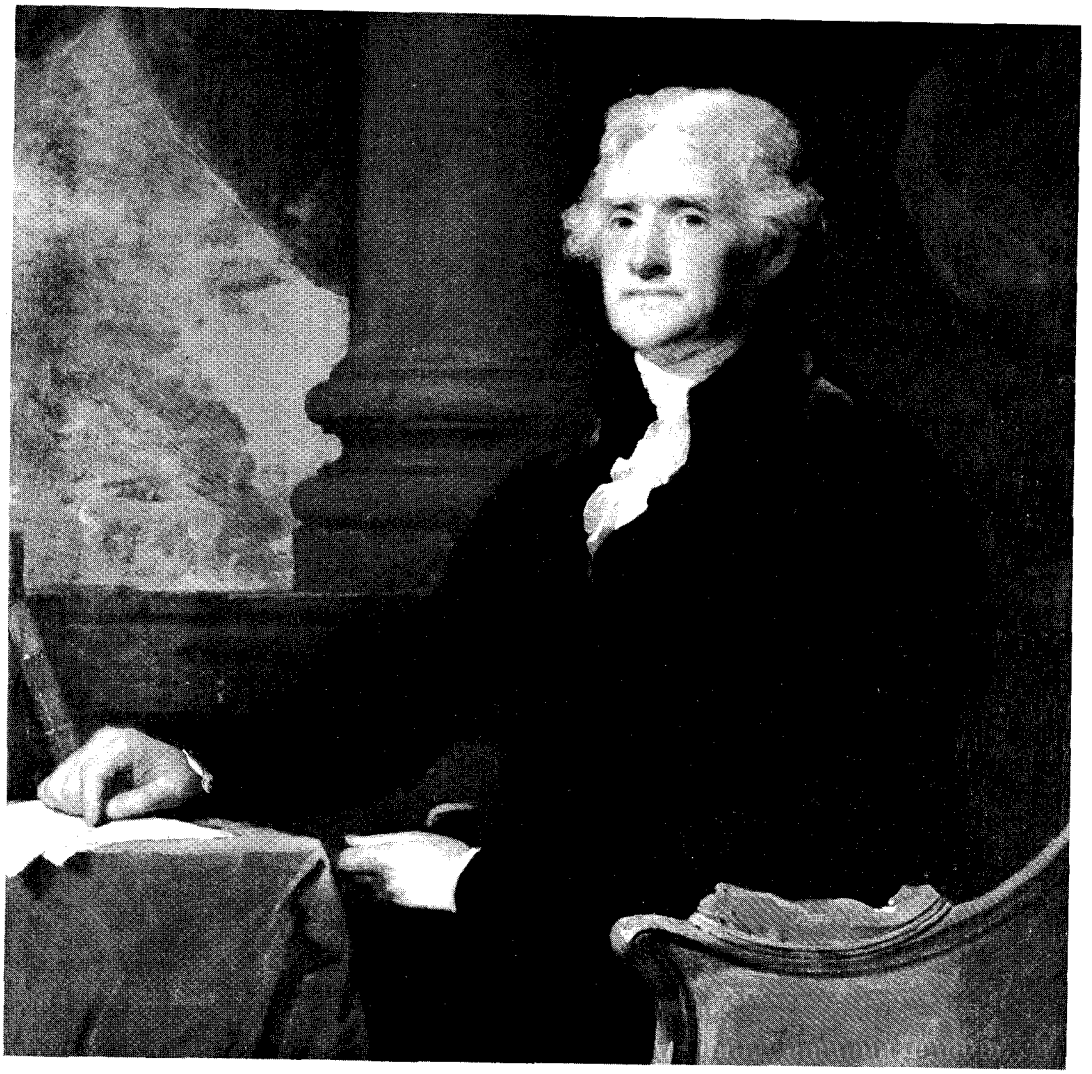

Sir Monticello Mar. 27. 25.

I am a subscriber to the N. American review and understand you are agent for that work in Richmond. it will be more convenient for me to have it furnished from that place because payment there is easier made. I shall be glad therefore to receive it from you. and this letter presented to Col. Bernard Peyton, my correspt of Richmond will ensure your receiving payment from him on my account, once a year or oftener if you chuse. I have received No. 46. but not Nos. 44. and 45. which I shall be glad therefore now to receive. accept the assurance of my respect.

Th: J

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REVIEW

Founded in 1815 Volume 265, Number 1 Spring 1980

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RATES:
$2.00 a copy; $8.00 a year in the U.S. and its possessions, $8.50 in Canada and Latin America; all others $9.50 a year.

Cover serigraph by *Virginia Stover Minot*. Illustrations by *Ted Kooser, Pamela Scesniak, Roy Behrens, K. Dyble Thompson, Charles Vansen, Cor Hoekstra*. Photos by *Pamela Scesniak* (35), *John Patterson III* (53-56), *Lawrence Sturhahn* (73-75).

FEATURE

18 A Death in the Glitter Palace, *by David Hellerstein*
53 On Location in Montana, *by Greg Leichner*

FICTION

24 The Lover of Words, *by Barry Lopez*
28 Highway, *by Peter Corodimas*
31 Every Day a Visitor, *by Richard Abrons*
35 The Word on Earl Mulhollan, *by John Mort*
42 Here, *by Daniel Fleshler*
45 The Conference, *by Jonathan Baumbach*
49 After Julia Died, *by John C. Hall*

POETRY

17 The Musics, *by Albert Goldbarth*
23 After a Day We Stay in Bed, *by Lyn Lifshin*
27 Blue Ridge, *by Elizabeth Hodges*
Shadow in the Air, *by T.R. Hummer*
40 Window Built for My Daughter at the Summer Solstice, *by William Pitt Root*
48 Quechua, *by Christopher Buckley*
57 Where There Was Stillness, *by Dara Wier*
The Inexpressible, *by Stephen Dunn*

DEPARTMENTS

4 American Eye: BAJA TRAVELS, *by Frederic Will*
10 Foreign Correspondence: MISSING DATES, *by Maria Thomas*
16 Cuttings: MADNESS IN THE MIDEAST, *by Kenneth Lash*
58 Books and Authors: SIGMUND FREUD, *by Thomas H. Thompson;* KOSINSKI AND HIS CRITICS, *by Daniel J. Cahill;* BRIEF FICTION REVIEWS, *by Mary Peterson*
71 Synecdoche: BRIEF POETRY NOTICES
73 Film: ANKLE-STRAPS & OTHER MATTERS, *by Lawrence Sturhahn*

THE NORTH AMERICAN REVIEW [ISSN 0029-2397], Spring 1980, Vol. 265, No. 1. Published quarterly, in March, June, September, December by the University of Northern Iowa, 1222 West 27th Street, Cedar Falls, Iowa 50613. Annual subscription rates: $8.00 in the United States and its possessions, $8.50 in Canada and Latin America, $9.50 in all other countries. Second class postage paid at Cedar Falls, Iowa 50613. Copyright © 1980 by the University of Northern Iowa. All rights, including translation into other languages, reserved. No part of this periodical may be reproduced without the permission of THE NORTH AMERICAN REVIEW. Opinions expressed by contributors do not necessarily reflect those of the editors or of the University of Northern Iowa. Unsolicited manuscripts will not be returned unless accompanied by self-addressed envelope with sufficient postage affixed. Claims for subscriber copies not received must be made within six months of date of publication. POSTMASTER: Return undeliverable copies to *The North American Review*, University of Northern Iowa, 1222 West 27th Street, Cedar Falls, Iowa 50613. THE NORTH AMERICAN REVIEW is indexed in the Annual Bibliography of English Language and Literature, the Humanities Index, Index to Little Magazines, Index of American Periodical Verse, the Book Review Index, and others. Member of the Coordinating Council of Literary Magazines (CCLM) and the Committee of Small Magazine Editors and Publishers (COSMEP). Article reprints and back file volumes in microform are available from University Microfilms International, 300 N. Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor, Michigan 48106 or 18 Bedford Row, London WC1R 4EJ. United States and Canadian newsstand distribution by Eastern News Distributors, Inc., 111 Eighth Avenue, New York, N.Y. 10011.

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Baja Travels:

A Journal

From asphalt onto gravel the world goes down. In the north we had come to believe in the badness of roads. In the region of San Ignacio anything flat—a board, a slab—looked good. Now once again we were groaning with the car. It groaned back too, and started to shed. The land backed off bleakly on every side.

Twenty kilometers north of Insurgentes, we stopped for gas and heard the sharp plonk-plonking of liquid under the motor; we bent down flat in the dust and watched it drip, a fine dark hemorrhage. The mechanic? In this settlement of Colonia Purisima, submerged in the Santo Domingo valley, the mechanic lived just across the road. We steered the car to his door. Finding him out for a while we stepped next door; for fried eggs, coffee, and refried beans with the woman who did the cooking. Lots of coffee to follow. On the table before us the thick rough pottery jar of water; cool and ancient the format. It was very silent. In an hour the mechanic, a man of twenty, came in from the fields. He went straight to the problem, a leak in the radiator. He had to weld. We were reduced to spectators, watching our fate.

Like other Baja garages and workshops this one was both order and chaos. Every tool in the business lay there dusty, greasy, piled onto orange crates, in black tin cans, on greasy rags, or scattered in the dust. The welding equipment was brought out from under a scabrous lean-to next to the pigsty. Yet the man had every object filed in his head; even the peppy black Durocs, which spurted around in their sty when he called them by name.

While we were watching the operation a couple of cars pulled up, fresh in from the beach at San Carlo; the talk we heard was all *tortugas*, giant turtles. Two men hopped out and opened the trunk of their car to reveal: two enormous turtles, each at least four feet in diameter, more than eight feet around. They'd been caught that morning. The guys pulled them out and dragged and tossed them onto the ground. The *tortugas* hit hard, belly first, then struggled to regain a grip on the soil, clutched at the dust for a hold. The mechanic and several other men, who had suddenly come on to the scene, arrived and admired the pair of turtles; even, I think, with a certain dread. In a minute they grabbed the animals and carried them heavily to the other side of the yard, where they tossed them, this time with stomachs up and feet waving wildly, into a half-shaded corner. Everyone but us forgot them. The day went on. The talk turned to other things. The car was slowly repaired.

We couldn't keep away from the sight; it was obscene, watching the creatures flail in the empty corner, turning up dust. We went over there to a teen-age girl, who had come out of the house to hang up clothes, and who was standing close to the action. How old were the turtles? The older, she guessed, was a year and a half; the younger a baby, a couple of months. We looked at them closely. The older had barnacles stuck to its shell, and a couple of leechlike fishlets. The turtle's multifaceted eyes were flecked with the dust and darkened out of any emotion. The baby stared straight up at us into our stare. They were both the memory of the sea as they lay in the swallowing dust.

Later, after the car was fixed and we moved again, we talked to each other about these things. We traded notes. Together we had thought the *tortugas* were dying for us. Their clumsy and sluggish thrashing, the dull pain in their eyes, the dust that was caking them now, after months of ocean; it was some crucial tale of nature that gives itself up in pain, bearing itself onward in throes like these.

North of Colonia Purisima the road degenerates rapidly; roughens, grows crooked, passes into an inhuman landscape. A few miles along this road the muffler came loose. After I had crawled round the car to repair, it was hard to stand up again. The sun had settled its grip on this little world, eating cactus and scrub and sand and jackrabbits with its angry hot jaw. There was no room for a person to stand, where there was nothing but room. I tied up the rusty muffler with a piece of string, and leaped back into the car. Even *its* heat felt like a shelter now. The sky was, as usual, more than cloudless; aggressively bare, tauntingly white. Only a couple of roadrunners, thick and slow, gathering speed as they reached the ruts of the road.

* * *

At noon we left the Santo Domingo Valley, which for some time had given up all it had ever claimed, a few oases of fruit, the product of irrigation; and we turned due east, toward the Comondús. We were down to ten miles an hour now, enough for the terrain; but slow, and mile after mile growing slower. The washboard effect—what Mexicans call the 'permanent wave'—had taken over the road. From time to time the road passed through a small oasis, then advanced timidly. There was little to arrest us—except a tiny graveyard, fence-surrounded; the graves were covered with motor oil cans full of drying flowers. Seashells were spread on the graves. A dry hard corner of land through which to reenter the world.

After an hour of painful driving, west of the Comondús, the road slowly carves itself downward into the sand, deepens its sides, and becomes a trough. At the same time the vegetation changes. Again you move into an encounter between arid desert and tropical plantation. This time the plantation goes on and on, mile after mile. When it becomes scattered palmetto huts you have come to the outskirts of San Miguel Comondú.

That village, like Mulege and La Purisima, is long and thin, stretching the length of a river bed; but unlike

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FREDERIC WILL's selected poems have just been published by Massachusetts. The prose here is from A Baja Journal (1969).

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those other villages San Miguel has some depth, and a square for watching the depth. Later we realized that all the riverbed land is held in common by the residents of this little town; a sharing which isolation makes safe and need makes useful. Perhaps the depth of San Miguel—both spatial and inward—is related to some such sharing. A communism that grows by itself.

The town feels good, in shadow or under a terrible baking sun so hard it hurts, cuts into the flesh like a rope. We touched San Miguel at several points; walking around; waiting around the garage; at table; and losing hair.

Broad streets lined with adobe houses make up the center. There is no visible wealth. Life goes no farther out than the doorstoop: a cat, a chicken, two girls asleep, an ancient woman. Flame trees burning with color at every turn. A staggering Van Gogh sun.

While the muffler was being fastened back we walked for a while in the dust near the garage. The tourists were coming these days, said a fat young buck. Yesterday two Italians. Somebody else from North America, some time before. The mechanic had little to say, even when asked about local matters—the crops, the rain. He was proud. Polite but reserved. He answered in simple and single phrases, doing his work. When he finished I asked him the cost. It was almost nothing. He named the amount without great attention, making it clear he wanted little and had his reasons. The sale of services could not be held more fiercely in toward the human bone. He had the thin light frame we had seen often in Baja, and was added at once to our list of Baja noblemen; a list swollen with the names of mechanics. Their role was crucial, and their skills needed, in a world where cars were both indispensable and worthless.

There is a general store in San Miguel, but it is dark and uninviting; stressing potatoes and tomato paste. But there are other centers of life. We came easily onto the man who had worked in the U.S.A., picking fruit. This man reported, from high up in his mind, on the ten years he'd spent in fruit orchards, in Upper California. Now he was home in the place, the very house, of his birth. He leaned back hard on his wicker chair and lighted a pipe. Two puppies lay sprawled under his chair. With some precaution we mentioned our hunger. In a moment his wife appeared with a granddaughter, and motioned for us to follow—toward food. We went at a trot.

The girl took us down a couple of blocks, past the simple church in the flood of sun; and into a door. The door, which was low, opened out into a widened corridor, dark and ripened with watery shadows. Ten yards down the corridor we came to a wide airy sitting room, fully but cooly lit from the yard behind. A portable radio blared, pop from the mainland. A gerbil went through his rounds in a little cage. We sat down and waited.

In a minute a still younger girl, high school age, came in shyly and asked what we wanted. While she cooked it we watched the shadows, through the tropical trees behind the house; the palm fronds stirring like the ears of mythical animals. The sky, from inside the room, looked drained and hard—its heat the mind's construction, and something that constructed the mind.

With the expected meal—ground meat, eggs, and peppers—the girl brought mangos so cold they were painful; and sweet beyond description. We ate those first. The girl sat with us, and asked and talked. Her life was around her there, but her spirit was unconfined. She was studying English by correspondence; she thought in terms of the mainland. And—rare enough here—she asked us about ourselves. She went very well with the mangos, after we'd gotten her to turn down the radio. It was so loud she seemed not to hear it.

When she brought in the coffee her uncle entered. We had seen him before up the hill, moving across the house where we'd first sat down; where we'd talked with the old fruit picker. The uncle was thin and fast and moved like a flame, quick and silent and puckish. He pulled up a chair, joked with the girl, then asked if we wanted some 'vin du pays.' But how would we get it? He scooted off toward the back of the house, then returned with a bottle; we started it fast; he helped to finish, did more than his share.

In a while he invited us into the garden. We followed through a small enclosure of bushes and flowers—a blade of grass is rare in Baja—down a small rocky path into the river bottom, dried up now but thoroughly damp; the lifeline of moisture and palms and bushes and fruit trees; of the whole village. There was place for abundance here, as seldom in Baja. The manic uncle strode with us through the luxuriance.

When we got back up, the village streets were rigid with sun. We followed uncle back to the place where he lived, and there were joined by others. We talked on out of our trip, impressions of Baja, of the Estados Unidos, and we asked in return. Somehow it got around to my hair, and before I knew it the uncle had become a barber. An inexorable machine had been set in motion.

* * *

The steps to the barber chair were lined with more of the local, which was dry and slippery, and thirsty for itself. With every swallow the sky got harder and the sun darker. It was good to be anywhere in the shade. I went to the chair. Suddenly several children were around me looking on, watching the wooden stool in the middle of space. A dog wasn't missing a trick.

Draped in a gigantic sheet, and without my glasses, I felt cut back into myself. The wine had sharpened humors; all the galactic ages reduced themselves here to these fingers and steel on my scalp in San Miguel. The spheres had been singing for this. The harvest fell off in gray brown swatches, mixed with the dust. A border collie, Juanito, kept passing in front of me, sniffing and pawing. Every few minutes the barber went trotting across the patio, to drink more wine. My traveling companions sat tripled with laughter, calling on the barber to chop me down to the stubble, photographing like mad. I was vaguely aware of the rest of the family, moving like spectator shadows in some light at the world's end.

In thirty minutes it was over. I reached for my glasses and the world they brought. Months of achievement scattered like spinach around me. I stood up stripped to the skull, and merry into the butcher's smile. Juanito brushed against me like a warm old friend. We'd been through a lot. He'd formed his own opinions, too.

As we paid and started to leave I noticed a pocket drama, that hung on these great events like a tail. The girl who had lunched us was talking to the government doctor. That cool young

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guy, sent in from Mexico City for a year in the Comondús, had pulled up here on his rounds. He was driving a tidy jeep with a painted band; hippie symbols around it. He was as tidy as what he drove. A classic meeting, country and city.

* * *

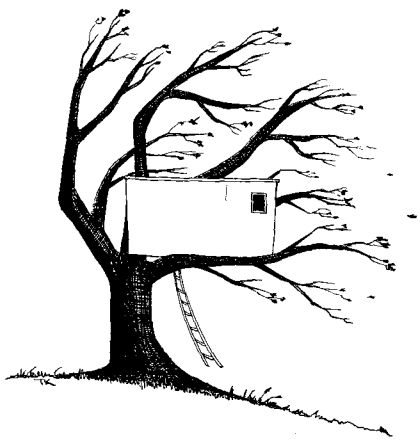
It is only a couple of kilometers to San José Comondú, yet the mood reverses somewhere on that road. The foliage grows larger and denser, the road contracts, and planted fields, richer at every step, grow strangely exuberant: planted and well nursed palm trees assembling on every side round the car. When we got in close we saw that the garden flatland, communal in San Miguel, had spread itself out, flattened still more, and had become a palm-field in San José. Here the flatland was far more open than it had been in San Miguel. Yet it was no longer community land.

We drove down in where a couple of men were sitting, talking beside a path. They were tattered and middle-aged, talking but almost asleep. Their pipes gave the sign of life in the smokey air. The ground was littered with rotten and dried out dates. We went slowly up, advancing with wordsful: 'Could we pitch our tent here, on the flat?' Was it private land? Or posted community land? The much more ragged man of the two replied, 'It belongs to me.' Later that evening, when we entered the tent and settled, he passed us, crossing his rough domain with an armful of branches. He was checking us out. He was the lord and serf of the manor.

Earlier that evening the bats and buzzards had swarmed like satellites in a gothic sky. The palm trees had turned gray red all around us. We took a walk into the brush, to learn a little about buzzard prey: the swollen corpse of a dog. Another excursion, to see the sights: a penful of shaky and feeble cows. The earth seemed ready to offer these things. What the bats knew or thought we couldn't guess. They strafed the Scout as we fixed our food on its hood; swooped and then vanished, like huge indecent humming-birds. You could feel them inside your clothes.

The human community, above us over the flats, looked clean and discreet; we went up there walking after dinner. San José, like its sister village, was unified, beginning with the square, the center of gravity. (These southern squares, from Santa Rosalia on, had seemed able to hold a total village together; guarantees against entropy.) This one held itself close to the ground, dispersed around four huge olive trees.(They hugged the shadow and turned it back into itself.) Four cracked stone benches made us sit down, alone; there was no one around. The sun was setting, making the spot an intimate pocket of time. Across from us low bright buildings were shining, one of them hard red, the Baja color of blood.

From where we sat we saw men passing time through their eyes, letting night take place. A few of them lounged at the other end of the square, a couple more on a doorstoop a block away. There was little talk. Something about that evening seemed made to cut off talk—the way shadows came down in the trees and even up here, in the town, bats creased tracery folds in the palpable leather sky. The men left a few feet between them as they sat, seemed never to look at each other, even in



speaking; each wore a machete scabbarded up on his right hip side. The secret of this weapon was clearer later.

The village had turned on a few lights when we went back down by the opposite side of the still main street. Through half-drawn curtains we could see quiet interiors, women weaving or cooking, a man with a long tortilla in hand, reading a book. There were no cars in the world. There was hardly a sound. The moon was busy taping itself to a distant palm.

In the flatland it was already dark. Our tent sat outlined in moonlight, anchored firm in the palm-frond humus. As we were taking the sleeping bags out from the car, and looking again, we saw two men coming up. They greeted us, their eyes and teeth bright marks in the night. They said very little, and that little was kind; they perched on their haunches not far from the car, smoking, talking low like the fishermen an earlier night at Conception Bay. I stayed for a minute and told them, easy, just who we were. It was enough. 'Great place,' I said, blessing San José, alluding with a hand-sweep. But neither of them agreed. 'O no, señor, muy feo lugar,' a 'very ugly place'; they were straight *vaqueros*, preferred their ranchos, and only rarely came in even here to the Comondús. Their machetes were tightly clipped to their sides.

When we entered the tent at last, and spread out our stuff, we could see a body pressed against the entrance; the canvas sagged. We opened enough to let in the furry head of Juanito, the faithful eccentric border collie. He had followed us here. Driving over to San José we had tried to lose him, to avoid him and lose him as he danced through our wheels. But the whiskered nose had come through again. We gave him a love punch, threw him silently out, and went to sleep.

In the morning at five we woke to the sound of the work of machetes. They were flashing high in the palms where the men we had seen the night before were fastened and chopping. The great still trees were shedding their foliage in the rhythmic slicing. It covered the ground. One of the men who climbed down came over to see us, refused a coffee, perched on his haunches, explained; the fronds were fodder, cut every day for the cattle. It was agriculture.

* * *

We folded our tent in the early morning, cooked bacon and coffee and hit the road. It was all Franciscan nature turning out to greet us, as we were leaving the Comondús. For once there were many roadrunners, spurting across in front of the car, top heavy, vulnerable, intense as pigeons. The buzzards patrolled. Black Baja squirrels went skittering wildly over the road, their tails like flags. Chameleons, lizards, and hummingbirds flickered in greeting, picked up the sun and lost it, too quick even to be held in a glance, so live even their resting points were vibrant.

We went back the way we came. Past San Miguel, into the desert, past mesas, arroyos, cliffs. The desert looked sullen and empty, after our time in the twin oases. It was terrible

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here and silent. All we could recognize—from our trip in—was the dusty graveyard covered with used-up oil cans and used-up seashells. The next memento was a road sign pointing to La Purisima. We turned off there in the chalky dust, to fill up another hole in the map.

From there on the road got steadily worse: narrower, rougher, harder, and then fading off to a track. At the same time the landscape became increasingly monotonous, merciless, and anonymous. It was a relief to see a sign offering some, any, alternative: the faded paint, on the board that was nailed to a cactus on the left of the road, said *Las Barrancas, Playa—The headlands, BEACH.* It was not too far. The paint suggested fifteen miles. On the map there was no such name as Las Barrancas, though the sign promised the sea.

The road that led there was a bare path, winding on tirelessly through the cactus; an hour and a half with nothing to see. Then, in the distance, a tiny shabby *colonia* appeared, perched on the ledge of a cliff, and beyond it the lipless mouth of the ocean. The ocean looked stark as metal.

As we approached we could see two rows of lean-to shacks, a wide main 'street'; everywhere dust and ordure and sand, and by two of the shacks men standing, up to their necks in conversation. We made ourselves known, locked up the Scout, and went heavily down through the sand to the sea. An awkward walk, passing through garbage, exhausted tires, tin cans, excrement; down through the soggy sand at the jump-off end of the shabby *colonia.*

Around Las Barrancas the Pacific is still the cold hard ocean of Rosarito or Miller's Landing, but much less pure, self-polluted. The sand beach is twenty-five feet in depth—a flat expanse, seemingly hard enough for a car to drive down, but at any point fundamentally wet. Soggy. Soaked through and hard. Brick hard sand.

My buddies flicked in their lines and prayed for fish, while I took off my shoes and walked two miles up the coast. I was soon out of sight of Las Barrancas—alone, as it is easy to be, on this side of Baja. Or not alone; away from men and alert, suddenly and sharply, to the other life. Here, as at Santispac Cove, there were crabs everywhere. Under every straggle of seaweed; in holes on the beach; and there, like spontaneous growths, wherever the tide converged with the land. I could walk out fifty yards into the sea-bed at any point without getting wet above the knees—all the way out crabs skittering away from me, pincers first, bodies twisted; an awful baroque ballet. Rather, half a baroque ballet. Overhead, swooping, knifing the water, came shrikes; death dance of unlucky crabs.

Farther out the breakers were just coming in; slowly preparing their attack. Row after row. Was every seventh the mountain, the crest? It was not that clear. There was rhythm without regularity. The sand showed the effects of this tireless machine. Arc after arc of seaweed was spread up onto the shore, each marking a level of energy which was still in the world. As the sun went lower the coast took on its old desolation again. Things got smaller and smaller, the ocean came more to the center, and in it—I looked again—there was no held point, no position of rest. It all flowed away through itself like a dream.

When we left Las Barrancas the men were preparing to fish. They had come down onto the beach with their nets and corks; were spreading and drying, oiling their engines. For hours they'd talked in the shadows up on the flats. Now the ocean would do the talking.

From far away, still, we could see the ocean behind us, and could water the desert. We went on back up the broken track through the broken land, once again missing out on major turns and going astray in the nothing. What from one direction looked unmistakeable, in this faceless land looked totally different on the return. When we finally came to, there was nothing familiar around.

An hour later we began to worry. This was no place to put in a night—proverbial country for snakes, very bad country for bad car trouble. (Right now our muffler was failing, who knew the details of the radiator?) The chances were, to judge from the sun and the time we'd put in, that we were close to La Purisima. While we were working that out we came to Portón; the darkest vision since Rubén Jaramillo.

This set of fifteen shacks was housing a migrant group, in search of semi-permanent water supplies—a group held together by elementary need. This time even the order of shacks was irregular; fifteen hovels divided by wandering paths. But there was life: women at work in the clean-swept shelters, children assembling games out of pieces of driftwood and string, and men—busy as executives—puttering close to their shacks. We talked to one of these men who was working in his *huerto,* his almost invisible garden. The fence around his garden was six feet by three, and did little defining; the wind blew a heavy top shingle of dust wherever it listed. Luckily—and naturally—the man saw neither humor nor irony in what he was doing, or in the place he was working; a stamp's worth of dust where he'd planted a single green pepper, a stalk of corn, a tomato plant, and several thin herbs. It was the only cultivated land around, his source of pride. Where do the Portón residents find food at all? We didn't ask. The farmer to whom we had talked seemed well and strong. His wife and a couple of children came out when we left, and joined him in waving good-by. In nothing they stood, apparently quite content. . . .

* * *

South of Constitución the paved road continues bravely, through desolation broken by occasional lush fields of cotton and irrigation. Somewhere along this stretch a new agricultural Baja will start, and will come to life. It will take no less than the government to make it succeed.

Other traces of man in this waterless stretch? Yes, every thirty-five miles or so: a rancho gone wild, with signs, pop and tortillas, even with beer; perhaps offering a fire over wood, a meal of enchiladas. Those sleepy people will wake with a start, in ten or twenty years, to find themselves straddling a highway crowded with tourists instead of a pile of cactus. Other traces of man today? One. A cactus, fifty miles north of La Paz, which is covered with snow white plaster, and gleams in the afternoon light; waving its *cardón* arms, saying Look here, and showing, in a square recess cut out from its heart, a tiny icon of the Virgin of Guadelupe, a dozen pesos, some withered flowers, and a lock of hair.

The Bay of La Paz takes over an hour before the city itself can be seen. At first you feel simply that this is the ocean. So large is the Bay. So blue—and green, and black, and even creamy—this water becomes, in

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the shadings of color which lead it out toward the genuine ocean.

Then the city starts to assume a form of its own—a straggling and rather formless form, as often happens in Baja: a couple of houses beside the road, a garage, then a prospect of more. Then a little more. Then a little less.

The Bay turns out to shelter the whole wide curve of the city. (Like the Aegean at Saloniki; though there Greece is brighter, more violent, more clearly an attack on the eyes.) Here the curve of the boardwalk, the *Malecon,* is statelier, longer, finer than any in Baja. It is worth a gradual parade of your eyes.

On the water side are piers reaching out like fingers into the harbor; rickety limbs you can see through, even fifty yards out, into an ocean not yet quite three feet deep. Shallow, green, untouched. Among the piers, and across the road, is a mixture of little shops, snack bars, 'curiosity shops'—stuff from the Orient, brought here cheap, to the La Paz Free Port. There are a couple of hotels for fishing gringos; a couple of outdoor cafés at which, startling in Baja, you can settle with coffee, the daily paper, and hear the civilized chatter of city people. The factitious, in these parts of La Paz, is condensed into two tasteful shops. They are stuffed with Mexican makings. The brilliance of Mexican folk art is spread out there. Yet no shred of the work they display has been made in Baja.

The Malecon is the rim or rind of the city; the fruit is above, within, and a little above, on the modest hill. Here are winding streets leading up, Spanish colonial doorways and grillwork, small local restaurants, little hotels; a small city gently and slowly and gracefully into its work. The hill grows level at the oldest core of the modern city; around the square are the Cathedral, a few colonial buildings, and a fringe of fine shops; book stores, clothing stores, banks. You can sit in that square until something begins to adopt *you* as its center.

Some atmosphere does just that: something lively, steeped with colors, a little tawdry. The town's young men are all around on the benches, stroking sleek moustaches, preparing the endless day in language. Little kids cross in droves, watch you a minute, go noisily on—to school, to help out their parents, to kick up dust on the bitterer sidestreets. The men of business meet in front of their dry goods shops and scatter predictions of weather or taxes.

Behind, among, and within these figures the landscape wraps itself, atmosphere. Flame trees, pepper trees, bougainvilleas, locust and palms; sharply divided species flow toward each other like a bright fluid filling the sky. What else prevents the sky from becoming cerulean; what else holds it in, slightly muffled, slightly blurred? Around the plaza no silhouette is firm, including your own—your own definition in space, your sense of yourself as taking up space.

At night the same square, and the blocks around it, are from Gothic romance. By nine most of the people have gone, leaving the center which is no longer a center. The moon seems to rise by habit straight up through the Cathedral, splitting its balanced spires like ancient branches. Everything hovers. At ten the movie lets out—the last attack of the human. That, too, is quickly over. By half past ten it is you and God.

* * *

It is hard to believe in La Paz as a city; though it is ten times the size of Santa Rosalia it feels smaller, more intimate, far more together. What city returns that quickly, without explanation, to the nature surrounding it?

We slept up and down the beaches that flow in and out of La Paz. They are oceanic and public, yet intimate, too. You feel you could sleep on the lawn of the Governor's Palace; even that would be right—though probably fatal.

Self-conscious liberal constitutional Mexico; it was suspect already to Graham Greene, when he wrote *Another Mexico,* describing the bitter anti-Catholic persecutions of the late thirties. It is equally suspect today. Around La Paz stand proud signs on almost every beach; *Keep your beach clean and pure, it belongs to you.* (Signs in so many public building, on so many walls: *Conserve limpia su ciudad: Keep your city clean.*) The pathos of modern Mexican history smiles through the crud on the streets and along the beaches: beer cans, broken glass, prophylactics, tomato peelings, car parts—the leavings of a badly mastered modernity.

We drove to the end of the road leading north from town, and found ourselves sand that was not yet lost; the crud wore out from the center, like energy fading away. Up there we tented for several nights, with the sound of the wind in canvas, near the shivering harbor lights of the Bay.

One afternoon we slummed. It was hot on the crowded public beach where the whole town swam. We'd had some beer, filets, enough of the sun, so we moved for a while to the other life, the terrace of La Posada, an American gift to the tourist world of La Paz. This gift was plenty expensive, thirty-five bucks a night, but the terrace was free, and the beer served there cost no more than up in the city.

When we arrived the place was almost empty. A half dozen waiters were lounging around; a dyspeptic mariachi band arrived in the late afternoon and slowly, like figures stepping out from the walls, a very few gringos appeared, made their ways to the beach or lounge chairs, and stretched out to bake. They baked themselves like strange crustaceans. We were exhausted from watching, could hardly raise our mugs to our lips. Mexico and the gringos and we were one—for a fateful moment.

Next day we paid a protracted visit to the Anthropological Museum, a deceptive but promising looking structure smack in the center of the plaza, beside the cinema. Would we find out something about Baja? Or even that there was nothing to find out?

The Museum's displays reflect the peninsula. They reflect little order, little care, almost no sense of display technique. One gets here no sense of Baja as a whole, as something either to know or to understand.

The first floor: copies of photographs which are classics of Mexican history; of Pancho Villa, Emilio Zapata, of crucial National and Revolutionary Assemblies. Poor reproductions of cliché scenes from the growing of modern Mexico; no reference at all into Baja. The second floor opens onto light and flowers, space, imagination; views onto the city, down into the bay; in toward responsive walls. What waits in this light? A couple of pre-Columbian Indian skeletons, forlorn, vertebral, and undiscussed—on display in an old glass case; some maps of the distribution of the (now eradicated) Indian tribes of Baja; and a series of excellent photographs of the Spanish Mis-

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sions in Upper California, 'our' California. Nothing is explained. It is all simply there, unwatched. But like many such Baja happenings this one makes a sense of its own. The Pre-Columbian Indian, dried to bone-dust, now haunts these forgotten rooms. The missionaries came for him here, to save his soul. Did they accomplish much? Is there still a soul in those bones? The pictured missions smile at the thought. They smile, too, at the fate which has left them there as photographs.

On a modest labelled door, downstairs, we found the key to an understanding never offered by the rooms upstairs. The Archivos de Baja California were under the supervision, that day, of two timid and reserved high school girls, volunteer workers. The operation to which they introduced us is staffed by local citizens, amateur archivists. What do those volunteers think of the job they are doing? What are they doing?

The historical archives of Baja are the shreds of a history seldom discussed and scarcely apparent. They are letters and documents, official orders and unofficial conspiracies, from a couple of centuries; the oldest item dates from 1744, at the height of the Spanish Colonization. Addressed to a Spanish priest in La Paz, that document gives suggestions for 'controlling the Indians' under missionary supervision, in royal ink still clear and forceful. As the oldest ink, it lies at the end of the top-most metal shelf—touchable, ready, pitifully unguarded.

Most of the earlier documents had been sent, or at least dictated, from Madrid and, like the royal document of 1744, concerned what the throne considered the Indians' spiritual and physical welfare. Some letters concerned the upkeep of Mission buildings, outlining, prescribing, and authorizing expenditures; others took up questions of agriculture. A long text, from the early nineteenth century, recorded an Indian's application to buy back his mother, who was enslaved to the Spanish administration. Another, from the same period, warned the King against impending invasion.

The unhistorical Baja, through which we had been traveling, was here replaced by its 'truth'; that the deserts, mountains, even the cacti were steeped in historical sauce.

–Frederic Will

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Of Note:

The story "Long Calls," by Frederick Busch, which appeared in the June 1979 NAR, has been selected for inclusion in *The Best American Short Stories 1980,* to be published later this year by Houghton Mifflin.

For his article "Political Heroes and Political Education," which appeared in the March 1979 issue of the NAR, Scott Edwards has received the George Washington Honor Medal Award from the Freedoms Foundation at Valley Forge.

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Missing Dates:

Islamabad Remembered

Yesterday the American embassy in Islamabad was attacked and burned and the State Department wants us out of here. We've been told to report to an evacuation point and wait until a truck comes to take us to the plane. Dan Craig has the radio communication in our part of town and his house is our evacuation point. About fifty of us will gather here. There are other houses like this around the city. Before dawn tomorrow, 450 Americans will leave Pakistan.

We arrive at Craigs', my husband, Jay, and my son, Rafe, and everyone is asking everyone else, "Where were you when it happened?" Sarah Craig, Dan's wife, holds up a big bottle of red wine and heads for her porch. I follow her. Aysha and Sadik Khan, Craigs' good Pakistani friends, have come to say good-bye. Other friends are there, not Americans: a German who makes furniture in Peshawar, his wife, a Canadian woman named Marla whose husband, she says, was out of town when it happened. We are all on the verge of tears. No one wants us to leave. We don't want to leave. Sadik Khan, a Colonel in the Pakistani army can't understand how such a horrible thing had happened. How did it happen? The other question of the hour.

I've liked this Aysha since I met her. She does everything good little Pakistani girls are not supposed to do. She tells me that she likes me. Right now we are both sorry that we don't know each other better. We're holding hands. I've got her perfumed handkerchief, and although I remind myself to give it back, I know I'll probably walk away with it, find it later someplace in my laundry distinguished by this perfume, fainter after washing like the memory of this night.

I ask the question again, "How did it happen?" Again Sadik says he doesn't know. They criticize General Zia. The German suggests powerful coincidences: the problems in Iran, the great turn of the Moslem calendar—"It was the eve of the 15th Century, after all, and the start of Muharram when you go out and die for Islam."—America's break with Pakistan over the atomic bomb they are building, the weakness of Zia, his fragile government.

His wife says, "It was this crazy report from the Ayatollah that Americans and Jews were occupying the mosque in Mecca. Totally irresponsible. They are fanatics, madmen."

Aysha hands me her glass of wine. I don't want any.

"Take some," the German says, "you will need it."

Marla is wondering if her husband, on a field trip in the Makkran, is safe. There have been stories of rioting in the outlying areas. "No news is good news," she says.

"I guess I'll never see the Makkran," I whisper.

"Don't say that!" Aysha tells me. Moslems don't like to talk about the future: no one can predict God's design. "*Inshallah*, you will be back," she says. At that moment I'm thinking that I can't possibly go until I see the Makkran, that wild stretch on the coast of Baluchistan. I've seen the pictures. I remember a poem by William Empson called "Missing Dates."

"We'll never be back," Sarah Craig says. "I've done this twice now—Indonesia, Saigon. You never go back."

"You mustn't say that," Aysha insists. I drink her wine until outside, past the shadows of the garden, I hear a sound. My imagination? The rhythm of a crowd gathering in the distance? "Listen," I say, stiffening. "They're chanting again." The day before it had come softly from a market three blocks away, across our still yards and in the windows like a breeze. On the porch it was loudest.

"It's the wind," Marla says.

"The wind, my ass," I say. "There's no wind." Those were not just students at the embassy yesterday. They were the people who sold me rice and apples, sat crosslegged in the bazaars and stitched my clothes. Like anyone betrayed, I've lost trust and they're all still out there, splintered by the darkness of the night before, hidden by the normalcy of this next day, but still out there. People estimated that there had been fifteen thousand of them and there had been no arrests.

"I don't hear anything," Aysha says.

"It isn't chanting," says Sadik. "Just the call to prayer." He smiles. We check our watches.

"I know how it must make you feel to hear the call," Aysha says. She's weeping softly and squeezing my hand. "But don't. Please don't. It's the most beautiful sound in the world."

* * *

The most beautiful sound in the world: I've heard it swell over the early ranges of the Himalayas, coming it seemed from the sky itself, rolling down toward the Jellum River into the valleys of Kashmir. I've heard it start tentatively and shyly before the dawn, a tiny stone mosque near a hotel window. I've woken to it blasting and moaning from huge speakers. I've leaned toward the sound over sharp ridges in the Swat Valley into an ice-grey afternoon, hundreds of men bent toward the East on the roofs of wooden mosques. I've been surprised in the bazaars by the piercing reminder (five times a day) that God is great.

* * *

"Where were you, my dear?" the German asks me.

"I was here at Sarah and Dan's, listening to it all on the radio."

"Was it awful?" Marla asks.

"It seemed unreal—like a bad movie, or a good movie, I don't know. The dialogue: people were actually calling each other these code names and saying things like 'roger and over.' I wanted it over fast so I could go home. Until I heard them calling for help from the school. Then

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MARIA THOMAS is back in the U.S. following the interruption of her husband's assignment with USAID in Pakistan. The NAR will publish fiction by her later this year.

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I thought it was real, man. I had a kid out there."

"I thought it was real," Sarah says. "I thought they were all going to die in there." The one hundred people trapped on the third floor of the embassy. "They were my friends," she says. "My colleagues." She starts to weep again. She feels guilty because, an embassy secretary, she could have been in there with the rest of them. Instead, she stayed home from work to kill her tapeworm. Imagine being lucky to have a tapeworm.

Jay comes out to the porch with a glass of whiskey. No ice cubes. "Where was the army, Sadik?" he asks. "Where were *you*?" Sadik is pained. He doesn't respond. "That was no demonstration, man," Jay says. "It was war. Only one side wasn't armed." He is so angry and has nowhere to put it. He says over and over, "When I went out to that school to get my kid, I was ready to kill someone. I told Lyle, I'm driving this goddamn Toyota right into the bastards if I have to."

* * *

Listening to the radio—language seemed so fragile, so helpless against the events, but all we had. Jay and I walked to Craigs' because they had the radio. Rafe was still at school, and the silence of our own house against the knowledge that we were somehow in danger was too much to bear. We needed to know it all. And we needed some friends.

"They're inside the compound!" Sarah said from the door. "Thousands of them. They got into the motor pool. All the cars are burning." She wore a red sweater; her fist was against her mouth. "I should be in there with Marie and Lucy and Dave and Mike. . . they're all trapped inside!"

Dan had the radio set up in the dining room. He crouched near it arranging the dials, the antenna. "They've completely flattened the American center in Pindi and Lahore. They're after the consulate in Lahore right now. Plus the bastards got into the American Express office here and busted stuff up in there. Oh yes, and the American bank: the employees had to get the hell out of there too."

"What's going on?" I said. "Is this a jihad?"

"The Ayatollah is now saying that Americans have occupied the Grand Mosque in Mecca. It's all over Pakistan on the radio."

"Who were the *idiots* that broadcast that shit?" Jay says.

"What about our kids?" I asked. "They won't send them home like targets on those school buses?"

"They're leaving them at the school until it's over," Dan said. "No one has ever gone after a school with kids in it. They'll be safe there. It'll be over soon, as soon as the army gets its shit together."

Dixie 14 called over the radio from inside the embassy: everyone was on the third floor of the building safe in the communications vault; the vault was holding; a marine had been wounded; they could stay there awhile but not forever.

. . . This is Dixie 14. Can someone tell us what's happening out there? . . . over.

. . . This is Dixie 12, Dixie 14. I can read you. The Pakistani army is on the way. Hold on and relax. We'll have you guys out of there by close of business. Are you all ok? . . . over.

We were surprised that the army wasn't there already because without them, the Americans in the embassy were defenseless. To leave them without protection in an attack was a barbaric act we hadn't even imagined. Outside the house, the street was calm. Buffalo grazed in the sun. A young girl pushed an old woman in a wheelchair. Someone's cook walked a dog. And here was this radio telling a story of imminent disaster.

. . . This is Dixie 14. There are people on the roof now. Where is the militia? Get those troops in here and get those people off the roof. Can anyone tell us what is happening out there? We can hear people in the building. What's going on? . . . over.

. . . This is Dixie 12. The Ambassador is on the phone to the foreign ministry. They're sending in more troops. We've been in contact with Zia. He's got reinforcements on the way. They're doing everything they can. . . over.

Sarah Craig was pacing the room. "But they're not doing anything at all. They've been trapped in there since before 2:00. No one is helping them." Jay walked from the kitchen with a bottle of beer. I took it away. My mouth was dry but the beer was warm.

"It isn't cold," he said, an apology.

"I'll put some on ice," I said. "How about some popcorn?" But my joke failed.

. . . This is Dixie 53. The embassy is on fire. . . the theater and the entrance. Smoke is pouring from the motor pool. The whole front of the second and third floors is on fire. . . over.

"What about the people in the compound? The people in those apartments?" I asked.

"They're all going to die!" Sarah started sobbing.

The radio told now about a helicopter hovering around the building. It dropped and lifted, pulsing the crowds that tormented the roof: they left and returned in its rhythm.

"What the hell are they doing?" Jay said. "Why can't the army get those people out of there?"

"There's too goddamn many of them," Dan said. Our information came unsteadily through static, sometimes only one side of the communications. "Listen," Dan said. "What did he just say? The tiles in the vault are melting. That's how fucking hot in there it is."

"Jesus," said Jay, "What are they *doing*?"

"Nothing," I answered. Then a broadcast told us that the troops were there, waiting near the embassy, not doing anything at all. Dixie 14 hollered: "*This is the third floor of the American Embassy. You have our permission to move those troops. . . tell Zia to give the order to MOVE THOSE TROOPS.*"

"I don't believe this," Sarah shouted.

Craigs' cook walked in with pieces of fried chicken on dishes. "Look at what your people are doing to us," Sarah said to him. He slipped away silently, eyes dimmed behind his thick glasses, confused. "Oh, I'm sorry," she said after him. We picked at the food, dishes pushed around the table into disarray.

We heard the school radio calling the Ambassador. A woman's voice said non-Americans were collecting their kids. She wanted to know if they had permission to send the American students out with them. "Hey, what is this?" I said. I had a vision of being separated, hurtled in a mob somewhere, in a fire, spun through chaos and into space wondering where my son was.

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"They're safest at the school," Dan said. "No one has gone after *kids*, ever."

"I want Rafe with *us*," I insisted. "I'm calling Lyle. He's got normal plates on that Toyota." Our plates marked us as Americans. "If you won't go out there and get him," I told Jay, "I'm going. If I have to take a taxi." It turned out my fear was premonition, Lyle hadn't been called a minute too soon because Dixie 17 is on again and asking for help. . . "*This is Dixie 17 at the international school. We need some help. They're coming into the compound. . . over.*"

When Lyle drove in—it seemed to take forever—I ran to the door with Jay. "No," he told me. "We can fill this Toyota with kids." So they left without me—Lyle nervous and the Toyota unable to do more than 30, Jay said later—and I stayed behind by the radio, helpless, and went round the bend.

* * *

There's a commotion at Craigs' doorway. More people are arriving. Luggage and babies crying and talk about being refugees. It's starting to look like steerage in this place. The Khans think they should go. Aysha is hugging Sarah. They're both weeping and so am I. I remember Aysha's handkerchief, but she presses me to keep it. "We'll never be the same," she says. "We have never been so shamed."

I see Rebecca and Dave Kaufman moving luggage into the house. They have two small boys, one just starting to walk. Rebecca looks completely frazzled but she's cracking a joke about how she didn't have time to wash her hair.

"The baby has diarrhea," she moans, "and I'm running out of Pampers. We were seriously considering leaving him behind."

Jay walks by us with a case of beer and asks if I want some. I do. There's a woman in the kitchen fixing some drinks. She seems to be having trouble with the ice cube tray. I don't know who she is, but I offer to help.

"My husband jumped out a window. My God! he jumped two stories," she tells me. She has a heavy Spanish accent. I ask her if they're Americans. She says, no, they're Spanish but he works for the American government, an architect. "He jumped right out. Flames all around him, I'm telling you." Her eyes are red and she's been drinking, but she's dressed her best—straight deeply-slit skirt, high boots, eyes made up, hair pulled tight, ringlets on her ears, belted sweater, gold chains and bracelets. She has some kind of antihistamine she wants to give the children so they can get to sleep. She shows it to me. "It isn't dangerous. For insect bites, see? They must get some sleep."

"Did your husband get hurt?" I ask her.

"Hah," she says, "never mind that. He thought for sure they would kill him as soon as he was on the ground, you know. The Pakistani in the office with him jumped out too. The other one is dead."

"Nazir," a man interrupts. I can tell he's the one who jumped, her husband, he takes her drink away. "Nazir wouldn't jump. I told him, you gonna die in here."

A woman who has been listening to our conversation calls loudly to Sarah Craig, "Sarah, it was Nazir. One of the dead Pakistanis is Nazir."

"Oh shit," says Sarah, "not Nazir."

"He was so nice," the woman tells me. "So nice."

"Tell them how you got away," the Spaniard says. "I was almost a widow—five minutes and I was a widow."

"I was on the ground," he says, "just lying there. I burned my arms and knees, broke my fall on a water heater. . ."

"Fires all around him like that," his wife interrupts. She does the sign of the cross.

"It was funny," he says. "A Pakistani came along and gave me his *shalwar kameez* and a cap. I'm Spanish, the mustache, the dark skin, all that. . . I just walked out, you know, shouting, *'Allah o akbar!'* Just like that."

"You see," his wife says, "they're not *all* bad."

Jay meanwhile has occupied the kitchen table with his four-band radio and is getting the BBC accounts on Mecca. It sounds like the end of the world. There are moments when I think we won't get out of here.

Rebecca Kaufman comes laughing, looking for a beer, this time carrying someone else's baby.

"Did you trade Matthew?" I ask her. She takes my beer, so I get another.

"I'm working on a deal," she says. "Isn't this one great?" The baby has that wide astonished look they get right before they start yowling. "She belongs to Ching Ward," Rebecca says. "Poor Ching has gone to the toilet. I bet it's the first time in two days she's had the chance." The baby apparently sees her mother moving out there in the crowd and starts squirming, spilling Rebecca's beer. "Barry Ward has to stay here and work," Rebecca says, "and Ching gets to go to Minnesota to her in-laws. She hates it there because they don't have any ginger root. You think I'm kidding?"

Ching takes the baby; she is tall and beautiful, a Taiwanese girl. She starts telling me right away what happened to her and how it makes no sense for her to be evacuated. "I'm Chinese," she says. "I have no danger. When I saw the flame yesterday, you know, I drive right out there with my baby. Barry was inside. They came rushing at me, you know, shouting 'KILL' and all that and I shout 'NO,' you make a mistake. I'm *'Chinese.'* I show them my hair. 'See my hair,' I said. *'Chinese.'* They left me alone." She's angry that she has to leave her husband.

"Your hair?" I muse.

"Yes, Americans don't have this kind of hair." She's right.

Andy Travers, Dixie 12, walks in with a Dutchman named Van Rijn who works for the UN. Travers makes an announcement in the living room that we won't be leaving until 4:00 a.m. He wants to know how everyone is doing. Travers himself appears to be drunk, hustles Dan Craig into a corner and is telling him something in earnest. I move near them to listen but he shuts up when he sees me and tells me to get lost. "Who are you?" he says.

"I'd like to hear this, too," I say. "Aren't we all in this?"

"No," he says. "Hey, but don't be mad at me, okay, kid? You're not mad at me are you?"

"Sure I'm mad," I tell him.

The Dutchman, Van Rijn starts talking to me. "Where were you when all this started?" he asks.

"At the market buying a pumpkin. You know, today is our Thanksgiving," I tell him. "The vegetable-*wallah* told me the Americans and Jews had stolen the Kaaba. I had this image of some arch villain ransoming the world with the bloody thing. Superman and James Bond, Batman to the rescue. I told the guy it

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was impossible. No one could steal the Kaaba. When I got home my Urdu teacher was on the phone. 'Don't come to class,' he told me. 'Don't go out at all. There's trouble at your embassy.' Then Jay came home."

Van Rijn nods. "It scares me. These chaps, even well educated ones, are still asking me, 'Do you think maybe the Americans are really behind this thing in Mecca?' They somehow *believe* it. This really scares me."

"Do you have to stay here?" I ask him.

"Oh yes," he says, "But I'm sending my wife out. Right now she has hepatitis. Very bad."

"Hey, Travers," Dave Kaufman says from the phone. "Your wife wants you to go home." Travers' answer is loud. He doesn't want to go yet; he doesn't care if she cooked the goddamn turkey. Van Rijn grabs him by the arm, tries to jolly him along. Travers turns to me. "Listen," he says. "Don't worry about anything. It's all right now, honey. If anyone tries to bother those trucks, I have a gun this time."

Loud static from the kitchen now, Jay with the BBC full blast describing events in Pakistan. They report uprisings all over the country, directed at Americans. "In addition," a flat voice says, "Christian schools in Karachi, Islamabad and Rawalpindi were attacked. Losses were heavy." Sarah Craig stops short in the kitchen door, looks out at me and mouths the word—"jihad."

I lean over Jay by the radio and whisper, "Andy Travers says he has a gun." I wonder at myself, so deadly serious delivering this line.

And Jay: "I'll take care of it." Will we laugh about all this when it's over? He talks to Sarah in a corner as I move back into the hall. I can hear Rebecca Kaufman telling someone, "Hey, I live next door to the Embassy of Lybia. Can you dig that?" Her rich laugh, "Like I never knew whether to put up my menora or not." Her baby is walking on top of some suitcases.

Sarah comes from the kitchen wide-armed, "Andy, DARLING!" embracing the man. They lose balance and topple to a pile of Craigs' carpets, she frisking him on the roll, fast hands and lots of chatter. She sees me and winks, no, there's no gun. So she's up then saying, "I think I'll take a shower and pack," and on the fourth stair to whoever is listening, "This is my *third* evacuation and I've got it down—plenty of clean undies, your jewelry and make-up."

I follow Sarah to see what's going on upstairs. Already she's kicking strewn teenagers out of her bedroom. My son, Rafe, is up here with his friends making a tape about where were you when it happened. He's got the equipment and is trying to do it right, only it's not so easy. A six year old who's listening tells me, "The big kids were the ones who wanted to fight, but they were the ones who were crying."

A girl, Wendy, grabs the microphone—"My turn, you guys. . . " —and stammers out her story of broken windows and rocks. "I saw Carl go after them with a cricket bat. That's when I ran to the gym."

"It was Wendy's loud screaming that broke the windows," Allen Craig says. I'm watching my son, who isn't talking much. "It wasn't anything," he said when his father finally got him home. But, for me, those had been the worst moments.

I can see that these kids are not ready to sleep; wound and winding, they're as high as anyone downstairs. Carl Evans walks right by me with an open beer.

"Hey, gimme some of that," this Wendy says.

Back in the living room the Spanish woman, more red-eyed than ever, is prescribing antihistamine to someone who looks like a visiting grandmother caught in the crossfire. "Just a teaspoon," she coaxes, dropping her head and closing her eyes in demonstration. The older woman doesn't seem to understand at all. Two little girls come to her with some food. "Tell her, okay, that it will make you sleep a little," the Spaniard pours syrup on a spoon and she's trying to give it to the smaller girl. The grandmother looks terrified but doesn't speak. "No no, Mummy, don't worry. I don't give it unless you say okay. Don't worry, Mummy." She empties the spoon.

Valerie James, my next door neighbor, comes to the rescue with a plate of turkey and pieces of pumpkin pie. The Spaniard is distracted but pushes the food away—"Oh, who can eat? We should all be sleeping!"

Meanwhile the grandmother has taken out a wad of hundred rupee notes and is counting them over and over again making frenzied calculations on an envelope. "Yugoslavian," Valerie whispers, handing me a piece of pumpkin pie. "Doesn't understand a word of English. Not a word. Her son's American, and his wife. They're in China on vacation. Oh boy!"

I say something about how wild it must be for this woman scrambled in language and events she doesn't understand. She has to trust everyone, without knowing what is going on, completely in the dark.

"Is it much different for us?" Valerie says. "Listen," she goes on, "I made that pie. You eat it. Those people aren't going to spoil my Thanksgiving." Yes, of course, it's Thanksgiving.

My pumpkin is still in a basket by the sink, and on abandoned shelves crocks of pickles and chutney, stores of spices in dark jars, special blends of cumin, fennel, tamarind, pastes of ginger and garlic, ghee and basel for the winter, powdered chilis, sacks of rice and grains, dried legumes. I had frozen sweet parcels of mango calculated to last until the new season in May, and it is only November. Who would eat those good things now? No, I don't want to leave Pakistan yet, even though I haven't been so happy here. We're nomads, used to packing, closing up, saying goodbye, and I complain about these endings, but I'd rather pack than not pack and I'd rather say goodbye than leave this way with two suitcases and the fraying ends of unfinished time, the things left undone, the chances missed.

Valerie, an organizer, is turning off the lights—probably as effective as antihistamine. She eases the lovely Yugoslavian lady onto the couch, covers her with a quilt. The girls are near, pillows on the floor. I don't think I have slept since Tuesday night. I have a feeling I may never sleep again. Last night when it was over—the hundred out and safe, two marines dead, four Pakistanis, our kids home safe, our friends phoned—we dared the darkened streets of Islamabad jammed into Craigs' big car. Expecting what? Sarah didn't want to stay in the house. She was convinced the mob would reassemble and go after Americans in their houses, but it was clear on the empty streets that the fury was spent. The Urdu radio was calling it "an unfortunate mistake."

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"Let's go back and drink to the Fifteenth Century," Jay said. We didn't go to our house but stayed that night at Craigs'. I may have slept a guest on the floor or tossed with only my shoes off on an empty bed upstairs but I was up before the dawn, opening a window and straining toward a high sad moan from not too far away. It seemed strange then, the sound, although it shouldn't have: I'd been hearing it for almost two years, the mosques of Islamabad remembering Allah across the breaking day. Within hours, we had been told: Pack two suitcases, you're leaving tonight.

* * *

By one o'clock Craigs' house is growing quiet. If people aren't sleeping at least they're silent. Courtesy and the end of the stories. Jay still has the BBC in the kitchen with the same news. The world is going mad. Finally he says he thinks he might be able to sleep and walks into the dining room and I, like Eve, press back against his side, a rigid body and his head bent back on no pillow to the floor. It's ridiculous to try to sleep.

At 3:30 Dan gets the call to pick up the trucks. Jay puts on his jacket and goes out with him. I don't want him gone, in another part of the city, out of sight. People are waking now. There are kids up and in the kitchen fighting over Cokes and trying to fix breakfast with no food. I hear Rafe's voice among them, "You can't do it," he says. They're trying to fry some frozen meat.

"Who knows when we'll get our next meal," Allen Craig says. "Hey, Rafe, ask your mother how to cook this. This may be our last meal."

"No time, fellas," I tell them. "We're leaving in half an hour."

"Jeee-sus," Allen wails, "I haven't packed yet."

"Dad said the plane wasn't leaving until seven. Why are we going now?" Rafe asks.

"Under the cover of darkness," I tell him, face dark, hair swirling. He hates all this drama over nothing. "You know what," I say, "yesterday I wanted out of here, but not now. I just want to go to our house and sleep."

"Not me," he says, "I hate this place. I never want to see this place again."

Suddenly more evacuees arrive—who didn't want to spend the night here. The vault had been enough. A young couple, Alice and Dale Reynolds, walk in with their newborn baby. I have heard their story. They were locked the seven hours in the vault, the baby left in the burning apartments, alive now only because a maid held him in the tub running water on him to keep him cool.

Marty Henneman, an embassy secretary, comes in with them—a single parent, she has her daughter with her. "That small baby," she tells me, "still smells like smoke. We all do."

"What was it like for them in there, knowing, thinking? I bet they didn't think they'd ever see that baby again."

"It was awful," Marty says.

The word suddenly is that a bus is there for us and a truck for the luggage. I head outside looking for Jay's tall straight body. He's up on the truck helping with the luggage. Rafe has decided he wants to be near us now. He's behind me saying, "Let's wait for Dad," but we're moving, separating, into the bus. I'm carrying too many things: coats, cameras, a bag heavy with papers. There's an armed Pakistani soldier on the bus, a guard. He's sound asleep. The bus is filling. I can see Rafe in front with some friends. Jay isn't on yet and for a few minutes I have a foolish fear that he may be left behind.

"My dog is on the truck and it's so cold," a woman across the aisle worries

"It's all right, dear. She'll be all right," her husband says.

A man with a list is calling off our names. "We're not all on yet," I call out. He tells us that we're going to rendezvous with the other buses at the British Embassy, count heads and go to the airport. I see with relief that Jay is climbing on, taking a seat near Rafe in the front. I wish they were both back here with me.

There's a strong smell of gasoline in the bus; people in back are complaining. "Open a window. We're getting fumed out," a kid shouts.

"I wish we'd get going," Sarah says from her seat behind me. "It's already 4:30." I open the window, reaching in front of her. Cold air. Very cold. And the high loud sad nasal whine of the *muezzin* calling the faithful to prayer.

This pre-dawn city is sad, a tomb, alive now only with the sounds of the mosques through tinny loudspeakers. Nothing like that riot was ever supposed to happen here. The capital was designed as a fortress against riot, laid flat against high hills on the north and eastern edges, a rectangle divided into neat sectors by wide avenues. Routes from the south and east converged at two main access points. Busloads of insurgents, we were assured and we assured worried newcomers, could not get into the city; police or army could simply pick them off at Zero Point or on the Mur-

LETTERS

To the Editor:

Peter Hartley's essay "educating Engineers" in the Fall 1979 issue hardly deserves comment. Much more readable ruminations on the undesirability of progress can be found, for example, in Emerson's essay "Works and Days" in *Society and Solitude* and George Orwell's book *The Road to Wigan Pier.*

One particularly serious error of fact deserves correction, however. It is untrue that "Evidence that most cancer is due to industrial pollution establishes that beyond doubt." In fact, it would be closer to the truth to make the sentence read "is not due". A good brief review of our knowledge of pollution and cancer is Merril Eisenbrid's article "Environmental Causes of Cancer" in *Environment 20,* #8 (October, 1978). In his succinct summary, "Pollution of air, food, and water by cancer-causing, industrially produced chemicals does not appear to be a major cause of cancer for the general population, despite popular belief to the contrary."

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ree Road. If they got in on foot, there was no cover; the army could ride the avenues and sweep them clean.

We park in front of the British Embassy for a long time. Jay is off the bus with Dan Craig's radio and I'm getting sick of this. I lean out the window and ask him, "What's going on?"

"A lot of bullshit," he says. "They can't figure out whether there were supposed to be ten or twelve buses."

"Good God, we're sitting ducks like this." Teachers from the International School, not Americans and not leaving, are walking among the buses saying goodbye to their students. Rafe's English teacher from last year is crying. She had been a wonderful teacher. When I see her, I begin to cry again. American teachers all have to leave. They are going to close the school.

"Why doesn't someone tell that driver to shut the lights off in this bus?" Dale Reynolds suddenly yells. "Hey driver, shut off the lights. All the other buses have got their lights off." The driver doesn't move. "The LIGHTS!" Dale repeats. I call to the driver in Urdu, but it does no good. Perhaps I've said it wrong.

I tell Sarah, "We're all going to be nuts before this is over."

"Close the window," Alice Reynolds yells. "It's too cold on my baby." I close the window.

"Open the window," the kids crank. "If someone lights a cigarette, we'll explode." The smell of gas is terrible.

"We can't leave it closed," I tell Alice weakly. She starts to cry. Outside I can see men with radios running around and jumping on buses. I don't see Jay, my head is straining clear out the window. "Close it!" Dale Reynolds insists, tapping my shoulder and dragging me in. The bus driver starts up and Jay, hand on the door rail, hops in.

Kaufman's baby is crying now. "He has a fever," Rebecca tells Sarah. "And the diarrhea isn't any better. This is worse than last Christmas in Wisconsin. I didn't think anything could be worse than that."

We move slowly a few hundred yards along the dirt road to the front of the ruined American Embassy and the caravan stops again. The view is perfect, flames playing in the gutted buildings, smoke billowing. A number of Pakistani soldiers and police are standing guard.

"What are they guarding it now for?" Dale complains.

"Do you suppose they wanted to give the folks a chance to relive those precious moments of yesterday?" I ask Sarah.

"I find this hard to believe," she says.

Jay is on the radio asking if this is a planned stop. The thought of an ambush, as ridiculous as it is, is not so ridiculous when you feel the way we do.

Dale jolts forward and shakes the sleeping soldier. The boys in back whisper obscenities in Urdu. I'm hoping their pronunciation is bad enough that the driver and the soldier won't understand. In the end, what does all this have to do with those two men? Or those boys in the rear of this reeking bus, or the language and the people they'll continue to abuse until they forget it all someday? When we left our house, the people who worked for us all wept; they tried to stop our going. "We are in such deep shame," the gardener said. "Pathans must defend their guests. We must pay for this shame." He moved a chair in front of our door. "I will sit here," he said, "and I will never move. If anyone comes to harm you, I will kill them. But no one will come. No one will hurt you. No one will even throw a leaf at you." I cried so hard I couldn't answer him. Jay was crying too. So was Rafe.

The buses finally move, slowly, in dramatic file. I feel as if I'm being put on show but there's no audience. The early streets are empty, no bullock carts or horse-drawn cabs or wildly painted trucks. It doesn't seem like Pakistan anymore.

"Was this necessary? Do we have to do it this way?" I ask Sarah.

"I don't know. Any way you do it, it's bad," she says.

The bus turns off the main road to the airport. In something like forty hours, we'll land in Washington DC with our two suitcases and our asses, as Dan Craig says. Be thankful. Two marines and four Pakistanis were dead. I never like to leave a place where I have lived and I always hope there'll be a chance to return, but that's rare, you don't come back, not to places like Pakistan anyway, and so I always try to take one last long look on the way out. Today, I pass that up.

–Maria Thomas

Coming in the Months Ahead:

Fiction by

Lois Metzger
M. Kimberly Calvillo
Catherine Petroski
Lee K. Abbott
Stephen Dixon
Kim Connell
Maria Thomas
Richard Kostelanetz
Frederick Barthelme
Daniel Lusk
Mark Halliday
T. Coraghessan Boyle
Trina M. Hikel
John Gerlach
Carl H. Clatterbuck
Shelley Costa
Cathy Earnest
Scott Sanders
Paul Evaristo Garcia
Mary Peterson
Linda Vozar
Matt Cohen
David Sander
Maurice Roche
Jim Christy
Jane Nudelman
Janice Eidus
Raymond Carver
Eric Larsen
Vera Inber
Daniel Asa Rose

(Not necessarily in that order.)

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Madness in the Mideast

and Other Considerations

It's tiresome to read editorial writings. They're forever urging the use of reason in the world of affairs. What a chance. You might read a hundred such writings, find all of them reasonable, and find none of any use outside a classroom or bar. The ancient ayatollah comes to remind us not that reason has limitations but that it is largely inapplicable in human affairs. It comes along *after* things have happened, to explain them; not before, to shape them. Dostoyevsky showed vividly that ideas are the theater of reason . . . and that life doesn't attend. The world's *experiential* grasp of reason is so slight that I often wonder if reason itself may be no more than an idea. Whose time has not come.

Carl Sagan and others write of how small a fraction of the brain's potential we are yet able to use. No one who has taught for twenty years requires that information. Mass education reveals the fact; shows no power whatever to remedy it. A consequence is that reason has been lately a declining force in affairs . . . declining in inverse proportion to the number of people proclaiming its use. (Language has, of course, declined along with it.)

It's likely that the ineffectiveness and all-around inefficiency of reason were concealed beneath long centuries of faith. Or in philosophy, of logic. Which is method, mechanics, not thought. A primitive computer, logic is. Now we've got an advanced one. Now it is technology, the "success" of technology, that conceals our inability to bring reason so to bear upon living affairs as to move them closer to a world of reason.

If in fact that is desirable—an hypothesis as yet unproved. For example, what of a country where reason held the power yet most people could reason but little? A behavior modification country, say.

I've seen oil-Arabs before and after their first visit to a London tailor. I've also seen someone get her nose "fixed." I suppose that sort of thing is on the Iranian mind. Driving it mad. How can an ancient, slow, austere culture absorb in moments the flow from the western technological cornucopia without waking one morning with an urge to throw up? How can such a people accept—emotionally or intellectually—the abrupt turnabout of their lives, whether or not the results of this turnabout are called "riches"?

No common sense can account for this sudden reversal of fortune and power. Ten years to reverse twenty-five centuries? Only fate can account for it. But fate in the religious, the Muslim, sense. Is then this "fate" to become the instrument of subverting the very beliefs that make sense of it? the only psychological way of internalizing it, honoring it?

Or, viewed another way: the Shah was getting the Iranians' nose fixed. The old religious fellow called it blasphemy, and the congregation—perhaps to its own surprise—agreed.

Change may be a darling of thought, but it is the blasphemer of faith.

* * *

Philip Morrison, in his delightful Bronowski Commemorative Lecture, proposed that *the* essential human characteristic is not an ability to evolve per se, but an ability to evolve within a speeded-up time frame uncharacteristic of other species. I wonder if there may be unrecognized human limits of tolerance to such swift evolvings, and if we may at the end of the twentieth (or twenty-thousandth?) century be testing them?

Our own contributions to change may be overloading the circuit. It might be sensible to consider devoting more of our forces toward intensifying adaptive abilities. Or we might pause to consider if the change we ourselves induce is ever really good or bad but thinking makes it so, since we never seem to foresee the larger outcome of our actions. Tomorrow remains beyond us. In our doings, we dream it as a New and Improved today.

* * *

Which brings me (logically) to consider automobiles and TV. Our "love affair" with automobiles has been much in the news, our noses rubbed in it by advanced reasoners. Reasoners are rarely high on love affairs. "Love affair," however, is too superficial a term to describe our feelings for the automobile, which are more profound than any affair ever was. The human and the automobile are meant for each other, in much the way erect posture was: once tried, its adaptation was inevitable. There's the connection with mobility, yes, but it goes deeper. Standing is distinctive, powerful. Handing out automobiles is an Olympian dream, like equality in distributing thunderbolts. The vision is primeval. At age 4 and 5 we used to build open cars of snow with scooped-out seats and real-stick stick shifts and sit out there on our skinny asses in near bliss going brum brum BRUM. . . . Aside from sophisticates and savages, is there any people anywhere in the world who know of automobiles and don't want one? Aren't drawn like a child to sweets? (Are sweets a mere idea? I think not. Prohibiting them is an idea.)

Consider this, in due amazement: The World Person can drive a car. Think of it. Thirty days out of the jungle or off a steppe and they can drive a car. Height, weight, sex, race, color, number of limbs, quotient of intelligence—it doesn't matter, they can drive a car. As if the act is somehow matched to an inherent human ability, to the agile and adept monkey in us. Not that we're all equally good

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at it, that's not to be expected, but just the marvel that damn near everybody in the world can manipulate this particular form of machine . . . at non-human speeds, along straight paths and curvings, through narrow openings, stopping it, starting it to move again alongside hundreds of others, all darting and flashing? Isn't that somehow fantastic? What other usage of technology is so universally "grasped"?

Guns? Guns don't count, they're old stuff, extended clubs. Television? Ah. It is becoming clear that only TV can compete with the car. (No matter how you read that.) Again we have a piece of technology universally adapted, "chosen." Social analysts call it the most important human "event" since the introduction of the wheel. Certainly TV's potential for affecting human society everywhere is a quantum leap beyond the car's. The car is a mover; TV is a shaper. With a car, we drive; with a TV, we are driven. The car produced franchised, standardized inns; the television produces franchised lives.

The wonder of it. And it appears when most needed, in a lonely age, an age of amorphous anxiety and rippling impotence. A time of unrelenting change when nothing stays put and nothing stays understood, and meaning melts in your grasp. Who can stand it eye to eye? Better to have pictures of life than life itself. We technocrats need our relaxation.

Is technology's supreme magic this gift to us of the power to choose to sleep through its doings?

ALBERT GOLDBARTH

THE MUSICS

The monk who strung the small perfect
skeleton of an owl, and
the musics it made, taking the air

for its body . . . there *is* a point, where bird
and sky-a-bird-flies-through are
indistinguishable, some aerated x

of bloodrush in the lung
. . . and then the exact perch-down on a branch,
the musics. Tonight their nestlust,

territorial, soar-me-a-corkscrew
singing travels tree-to-tree
as breeze does, making the thought

commotion soft. Your lips humming
ancient music in the round of my neck, you
know it goes down the ivory pins

and pestles, you know the interlocking ivory
tuningforks of my every movement
hum it in plasm, hum it and make me

brave with the fact of the monk's hut, how
our bones are really windchimes
in a lull we call the flesh.

Spring gleaning:

A friend of mine from Cedar Falls, Iowa, was at home listening to a Sierra Club recording of wolf calls when the phone rang. It was somebody from New York, calling about her subscription to *Saturday Review*, she heard vaguely. Attempting to switch the phone to her right ear she dropped it, near the record-player, near the wolf calls. Picking it up she heard the voice saying, "Are you all right? Where *is* Cedar Falls?"

* * *

Jim Hearst tells of the man who was doing a story on the matrons of Beacon Hill, Boston's oldest and highest society. He was fascinated, among other things, by the particular kind of hat favored by them, one not familiar to him. He asked one of the older ladies where they bought their hats. "Sir," she answered, "we *have* our hats."

* * *

I have a friend named Mike in Mill Valley, California, who a decade ago lived a year in Hong Kong. "A year like a lifetime." Among the oriental crowding of incidents was a seemingly small one—the saving of an archetypical "mangy cur" . . . from the combined threat of its own starvation and/or the relief of a human's. ("Dog is a delicacy in many streets.") Having been saved, it had to be taken home. Six months later? Of course, it had to be taken home further. Over the course of years it added to its early misfortunes a string of medical misadventures followed by hypochondria. "Butch" now lives in rich, permissive Marin County in a fine shingled house among woods of eucalyptus. The other occupants of the house, his benefactors, are civilized, amiable people. He hates everybody. He growls at everything. He's old, he's a veterinarian's dream, he has been given both the gift of life and a gifted life, and he hates every bit of it. Mike says he used to wish Butch could talk, tell his story. No more. "Who needs it?" he says, directing a playful kick at Butch's ribs. Butch growls deep in his old throat.

* * *

The real story of Lot's wife is that she was a nagging woman, constantly complaining about her Lot. (Something like Butch.) So when they were leaving town under that famous warning, walking silently across the plain, herself lagging behind, Lot suddenly shouted to her, "What's that behind you?" —*Kenneth Lash*

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A DEATH IN THE GLITTER PALACE

By David Hellerstein

Even now, half a year after her death, I cannot entirely get Cha Nan Chen out of my mind. She was not family or a lover, this twenty-eight year old Vietnamese woman with a flat broad face and two lethal diseases racing to kill her, but instead a patient of mine, to whom I struggled to give good care under hopeless circumstances. With Cha Nan Chen I shared the doctor's distant intimacy, even when I ordered the shots of morphine that let her die.

Her first malignancy, Hodgkin's Disease, a tumor of lymph nodes, had been cured by the time she came to the Medicine III Oncology Team at a major Medical Center, where, as a fourth year student, I was doing an advanced rotation. A combination of cell poisons and radiation therapy had melted it away. In its place, whether as a result of therapy or as an ironic natural evolution, mutant cells of Acute Myelogenous Leukemia (AML) began colonizing her decimated bone marrow and clogging her blood vessels. She had traded a cancer of the lymph nodes, with expected survival of perhaps three or four years, for a cancer of the blood cells that killed her in thirty days. The rationalization that such complications are uncommon, occurring in perhaps five per cent of cases, and that the lifespan of cancer patients given such aggressive therapy is, on the average, lengthened, gives comfort only to the statistician. But Cha Nan Chen was my patient and I mourn her.

A physician writing in the *New England Journal of Medicine* this year describes the problem dispassionately:

> An increasing incidence of therapy-linked Acute Myelogenous Leukemia is being reported in patients who receive chemotherapy, radiation therapy or immunosuppressive drugs for neoplastic and non-neoplastic diseases, including Hodgkin's Disease, lymphoma, ovarian carcinoma and others. The response rate of these patients to chemotherapy is poor, with remission rates of less than ten per cent in most series.

Or, as Susan Sontag writes more succinctly in her recent book *Illness as Metaphor:* "The treatment meant to cure kills." The radiation and the poisonous drugs given to cancer patients, especially when given in combination, have a distressing tendency to create new, incurable disease. Cha Nan Chen had gotten both chemotherapy and radiation. Though I did not know it at the time, when she came to be my patient it was too late: she was good as dead.

On July 6, 1979 a young Vietnamese woman of Chinese extraction came to the Oncology Clinic at the University Medical Center. For the past three weeks she had felt tired and lethargic, and small red dots had appeared by the dozen on her lower legs, upper chest and back. On July 4th, at a fireworks display with her three year old daughter and her father who had recently arrived from Viet Nam via Hong Kong, she began coughing and shaking uncontrollably. At home, despite aspirins and cold washcloths to her forehead and chest, for a night and a day she burned with fever. In the morning of the 6th she found her way to our Oncology Clinic, to the doctor who had been following her progress after treatment for Hodgkin's Disease. He saw her in clinic, and had blood drawn, which, under the microscope, revealed a frightening scarcity of white blood cells and platelets. Even more disturbing, among the white corpuscles of her blood were peculiarly "young" forms, cells that normally are confined to the marrow until further development has occurred. He telephoned the Med III Resident, Larry, who sent me, his sub-intern, down to clinic to admit the patient.

Oncology is a star department in the glitter palace medicine of the University; unlike Pediatrics or Obstetrics, which attract the young and insolvent, Oncology counts among its patients professionals and businessmen and others whom large savings have not protected against malignancy. The clinic, located in the hospital basement, is luxuriously carpeted and wallpapered, all color-coordinated, and trays of fruit (apples, grapes, bananas, oranges) are provided for clinic physicians. Sitting in the Conference Room, I munched grapes while reviewing the new patient's records.

Two thick manila volumes told me this: three years ago this young woman, a recent immigrant to the U.S., had been swept with inexplicable fevers that came and went without cause. At night she would wake drenched in sweat. And though she did not at first notice them, rubber-hard bumps—lymph nodes—swelled in her neck. Her doctor did notice them, waited awhile to see if they would disappear, and when they did not, sent her to a

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surgeon who sliced one out. A pathologist "elsewhere" (as one refers to hospitals outside the academic medical center's "here") saw whorls of crazily proliferating cells, and diagnosed Hodgkin's Disease of the Nodular Sclerosing type. This is one of four types of the disease, having intermediate mortality, worse than Lymphocyte Predominant but nowhere near as lethal as Lymphocyte Depletion. She was sent "here," where similar hard nodes were noted in the folds of her groin, and a hard, enlarged spleen was felt to abdominal palpation, grown down below the margin of her left ribs.

Then the efficient machinery of the Medical Center's Hodgkin's Disease protocol was set into motion. It is a marvel of glitter palace medicine: costly, scientific, aggressive, requiring the cooperation of half a dozen different departments within the medical center, and achieving heretofore unexcelled results in the treatment of rare disease. Patients with Hodgkin's Disease flock to the area for treatment, much as prospective heart transplant recipients, drowning in the fluids of their own hearts' failure, wait in nearby motel rooms and apartments for motorcyclists to smash their brains out on state highways and provide new hearts for them.

Along with routine blood studies, chest x-rays and so forth, the young woman had another node, from her groin, taken for biopsy, which confirmed the findings in her neck; a bone biopsy; and a lymphangiogram, in which dye is injected into the tiny lymph vessels of the feet to illuminate to x-ray the lymph nodes that enwrap the descending aorta; then she was sliced wide open by surgeons who removed her spleen and took biopsies of her liver and abdominal cavity nodes to detect the spread of disease. This process of "staging" showed disease in her spleen but not her liver or bone. Her disease fit category PS-III-SB, pathological stage III disease ("B" meaning symptomatic in onset and "S" involving the spleen), and she was recommended for combination chemotherapy and radiotherapy. Radiotherapy came first: TNI, total nodal irradiation, which consisted in large doses of x-rays to an area of her body from neck to groin, a "mantle" of lymph node-bearing regions of her neck and chest, and an "inverted Y" from belly to hips. Her heart and lungs and ovaries were protected by "shields" from the decimating radiation. All this Cha Nan Chen tolerated well, or so I gathered from the records, as she did the ensuing chemotherapy, eight monthly courses of Bleo-MOPP, a combination of five drugs hopefully more poisonous to the cancer than to the patient. All treatment ended October 1976. Since then she had been well. The Oncology Clinic flow sheet listed her monthly blood counts, which were stable, and each visit's chest x-ray, weight and vital signs, showing no change. Until three weeks ago, Cha Nan Chen had been, in Oncology jargon, "NED," i.e. with no evidence of disease—a Glitter Palace cure.

The woman I saw lying on a clinic examining table was young, Oriental, with a broad and not particularly pretty face to which sweat had plastered strands of black hair. She had on a hospital gown and cheap clunky shoes and her arms were wrapped around herself to lessen her shaking and terror. I introduced myself.

"Why do I have to be in the hospital again? Why do I have to be sick?"

I was afraid she'd start crying. I stood awkwardly beside her, waiting for her to regain her composure.

"I am sorry," she said. "What do you want to know?"

I questioned her about the Hodgkin's and its cure and her new symptoms, then examined her, noticing the red spots like scattered flecks of blood across her back, down her chest almost to her breasts, along her shins. The roof of her mouth too was scattered with them. My stethoscope against flecked back transmitted the dry rubbings of collapsed lung. And her abdomen, though scarred with surgery and burnt with a permanent radiation tan, showed no clues to disease.

She wanted to know what I'd found.

"Well, red spots, of course," I said. "And you're hot, feverish, and you have a cough. I think you will have to be hospitalized."

"Oh," she said, looking down at her clunky shoes, absolutely desolate.

"But we'll try to get you home as soon as possible."

I was standing by the nursing station later that afternoon, finishing my note on Cha Nan, when Larry, my Resident, returned. He was supposed to supervise my every move but often disappeared for hours at a time, off running in the hills or weightlifting or eating dinner with his girlfriend. Short and topheavy with muscle, Larry leaned up against me to read my note:

> 28 y.o. ♀ NSHD CSIISB/PSIIISB 3 yr. hx., s/p TNI 4500 rads mantle/3500 rads inverted Y, last 4/76, s/p Bleo-MOPP, last 10/76 → now 3 wks. hx. fatigue, cough & fever, blasts on smear → ?? 2° AML

He borrowed my stethoscope and lumbered off, thick-necked as a minotaur, to examine her. Twenty minutes later he returned, slapping the stethoscope against his thigh.

"So you think it's AML?" he said.

"The smear sure looked like it. Blasts all over. I've got it here, in my pocket, if you want to see it."

He shrugged. "What have you done so far?"

"Cultured everything—blood, sputum, urine, throat. Chest x-ray. All the usual bloods. Reverse isolation. Six units of platelets. Oh, also, I wrote for Hematology consult and scheduled a marrow for tomorrow. I didn't know whether to write for K, G and C."

"Let's wait on the antibiotics," he said. "Now, what do you want to do with her?"

"What do you mean? Treat her. Find out where the infection is. . . ."

"No, no, I mean the AML."

"I . . . I don't know. If it *is* AML, I guess, induce her. She's got a three year old daughter, she wants to get home to her."

"They don't respond, these AML's, to induction like the virgin ones do," he said. "Probably just end up killing her."

"The AML definitely will," I said. "She's already bleeding, febrile, probably septic. What choice do we have?"

"She's your patient."

The next morning, Cha Nan, lying on her belly, her flank scrubbed with iodine solution, draped with blue towels, anesthesized as well as can be done with xylocaine, screamed as I screwed a hollow metal bit into the bone of her hip. The bone marrow is one of medicine's most barbaric procedures, the exact technique one uses to

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drill a core from a tree to determine its age; for which one is most successful if speedy as a Civil War surgeon amputating a leg with only his sharp saw and bottle of whisky. My technique, though, lacking both brutality and speed, was immensely more painful. I could make her neither maple tree nor soldier: instead she remained a weeping Vietnamese woman who had lost her homeland and whose husband, an American once a soldier, had deserted her in the first illness, who was succumbing now to a second and worse disease we doctors had given her. Trembling, I screwed metal into bone. She writhed. I attached a syringe, tried to suck marrow out. She screamed. No marrow. "Just get the core," said Larry. I was drenched in sweat. I unscrewed the needle, hoping a red core of bone and marrow would stay caught in its hollowed center. But no—empty. "Have to do it again," said Larry, "We *need* the core." I stepped away from the bed, tore off my gloves. My bare hands shook. "I can't. You do it." Larry rolled up his sleeves, showing weightlifter's biceps, triceps, deltoids; he snapped on a pair of gloves and began.

Later, still sweating, I said, "I don't know *why* . . . I've done it half-a-dozen times before . . . I just couldn't . . . couldn't get the *distance* right."

He said, "You have to get *on* the bed, then bear down with every ounce of your weight."

We ordered fresh frozen plasma and six units of platelets to help her clotting, but when I left at nine that night, and indeed, when I arrived the next morning, the bone marrow site in her hip was still oozing blood.

2.

> Treatment [of cancer] . . . has a military flavor. Radiotherapy uses the metaphors of aerial warfare; patients are "bombarded" with toxic rays. And chemotherapy is chemical warfare, using poisons. Treatment aims to "kill" cancer cells (without, it is hoped, killing the patient). Unpleasant side effects of treatment are advertised, indeed over-advertised. ("The agony of chemotherapy" is a standard phrase.) It is impossible to avoid damaging or destroying healthy cells . . . but it is thought that nearly any damage to the body is justified if it saves the patient's life. Often, of course, it doesn't work. (As in: "We had to destroy Ben Suc in order to save it.") There is everything but the body count.
>
> Sontag, *Illness as Metaphor*

There is, with AML, the Blast Count: how many malignant cells float through the blood, like mines in a harbor.

Over the next few days the Med III team had several discussions about Cha Nan Chen. She was no more sick than half a dozen other patients on the service, though she did continue to run high fevers, to bleed from the marrow site and from her vagina (though her period had ended ten days ago), and to break out late at night in strange rashes that could only be controlled with large doses of steroids. The two interns on the service complained she kept them up all night. Her marrow biopsy was fixed and read: it was packed tight with blasts, Myeloid type. Hematology came to consult on the question of whether, and how, to treat what we now knew for certain was Acute Myeloid Leukemia. They told us that the ordinary patient with AML, if untreated, will die within two months; if "induced" by intensive chemotherapy which essentially wipes out the patient's bone marrow to allow the "good" cells to repopulate the areas where malignant cells have been killed, then the average patient may live a year or more. They laid emphasis on what we already knew: Cha Nan was not a typical patient and her disease was far less likely to respond. For treatment they recommended Ara-C and 6-TG which are in the class of "antimetabolite" drugs. In addition, they noted: "The patient will need to be supported with red cell, platelet and white cell transfusions through her period of aplasia." While her bombarded bone marrow was unable to produce normal blood cells, we had to replace them. Med III team, including our ward attending, Dr. B., the two interns, and Larry and I, discussed what to do at morning rounds.

Larry said he was with me, he wanted to treat her. Especially since Hematology, despite the odds, wanted to. Dr. B., who has seen many of these patients in recent years, said, "I'm really not sure if it's worth it."

"But her white count's zero point seven with sixty blasts. She's not responding to antibiotics. Unless we do something," I said, "She'll be dead in a few weeks."

"I don't disagree with that," said Dr. B., "I'm just saying that in the past, no matter what we do, we haven't had good responses."

"Maybe you just haven't tried hard enough," said Larry.

After rounds I went to see Cha Nan. She lay in bed watching cartoons on the TV hanging from the wall. Her face was bloated. I put on a blue face mask, wiped my stethoscope with an alcohol swab and washed my hands before touching her. Listening to her lungs I discovered a new area of consolidation just below her left shoulderblade.

"Say EEEEE," I said.

"AAAAAA."

"EEEEEE."

"AAAAAA."

Infection had settled in her lung. Depressed, I said nothing.

"I had a terrible night," she said. "I could not sleep at all."

"I know, Cha Nan. The interns keep complaining. You just get too many fevers."

"Why is that, David? And why do I always keep bleeding?"

I sat on the bed beside her, and we talked for an hour about the Ara-C and 6-TG and the white cell transfusions. She had seen Hematology yesterday, and accepted their recommendations without hesitation. "It is like last time," she said, "It will be hard to be treated but I have to do it."

"We do want," I said, "to get you back to your daughter."

We talked about her daughter Charlotte, who had been born in the U.S. a few years after she left Vietnam with her husband, just before the Hodgkin's was discovered. She described the chaos of Saigon; the bombs and the refugees; the courtyard of a French hotel where she had stayed, where prostitutes sat for hours under umbrella

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tables, ordering nothing; the panic when the last planes were leaving; and the difficulty in getting her father out of the country after the collapse. Even now his status in the U.S. was uncertain.

"I have to get out of the hospital next week," she said, "for one day only. To go to the courthouse downtown and get him papers—permanent residency papers. . . ."

"I don't think you'll be able to," I said. "But I'll write a letter, saying you can't leave the hospital, and asking if they can send the papers here. Okay?"

"Can you do that?" Her hand touched mine momentarily, damp and ill, then pulled away. She said, "I should not touch you?"

"To protect you," I said.

6-TG and Ara-C began. I was On Call a few nights later when she got her first white blood cell transfusion. It was Passover, and I'd been invited out for Seder; but I just couldn't get away. The interns wanted tonight off too. I ate dinner alone in the almost deserted cafeteria, and everything seemed to be going well—the usual fevers, bleeding, cough, red spots, nothing more—when I went to bed around midnight. At two a.m. my phone rang. It was Maureen, the night nurse:

"I'm worried about Cha Nan. She's got a horrible rash all over her legs. And her temp's up."

"What to?"

"Forty-one four."

"Oh God. What is that in real degrees?"

"Over one oh six . . . I don't know . . . it's off the scale."

I lay in bed in my green scrub-suit, the thrum of the Pediatrics ICU air conditioner on the roof nearby vibrating my panic loose.

"I've started an alcohol sponge bath, cooling blanket, Tylenol. . . ."

"Is . . . is she having trouble breathing?"

"No."

"Well," I said, relieved, "I'll be there in a minute. You might call Larry too."

I put on shoes and white coat, and stumbled down to the ward, where, except for Cha Nan's, disease seemed to have abated this Passover night. Silent, empty except for the ward clerk with a cup of coffee, reading the *Chronicle*. I recalled what an English grad student friend asked: 'Do you get a sense of things like Lewis Thomas describes, of a wonderful and complex order to life? Do you get a sense of astonishment?' I told him I hadn't felt that, only the horror of fighting decay on multiple fronts; and the occasional victory attained only partial, a matter of delay. 'What is there but time?' I had answered him. 'If you can give a person that . . .'

In her room, Cha Nan lay in agony. Her legs were covered with a red confluent rash—maculopapular and erythematous, my chart note would say—but ugly, spreading, furious. She was coughing, sweating, holding her right side.

Maureen said, "Her right flank's started hurting all of a sudden. I don't know what it is."

I washed, masked up, overwhelmed by a vision of Cha Nan as battlefield—an image I only later found put into words by Sontag—as our burnt and blasted terrain, defoliated, napalmed, cratered. She coughed worse with the white cells, which "localize to the site of infection," clogging her lungs as they attacked the bugs within; she flared like an incendiary torch; she shivered uncontrollably; her flank was sprayed with fire. She had sprouted, I noticed now, viral ulcers on her mouth. Herpes . . . herpes encephalitis would be a miserable way to go. Better to die of any bacteria. I seemed to pull away from it all, to see her from a great distance—I thought of my father, a young soldier, a doctor, standing at the entrance of Bergen-Belsen on the eve of the concentration camp's liberation; the stacks of bodies he photographed; the tiny photographs I discovered in a rubberized canvas bag in the back corner of a desk drawer in the attic room of my Ohio childhood, photographs that awakened in me inexplicable memories of one war I had not experienced and the expectation of another coming, in which I would be a soldier. . . .

"How are you doing, Cha Nan?"

"Not too good," she said. "Cold."

"You've given Benadryl, right?" I asked Maureen. She nodded. "A hundred of Solu-Medrol, then, that's what we want." Lateness buzzed in the air. "And for her side . . . Demerol, Dilaudid, whatever's ordered."

"I have to check with the Resident," she said.

"Fine," I said. To Cha Nan: "I know this is terrible. But your Blast Count *is* coming down. I think we're . . . you're making progress."

I went upstairs, wondering if any stem cells were left. If not, she might be getting from our treatment a third disease, aplastic anemia, worse than Hodgkin's and worse even than AML. Lying in bed unable to sleep, I couldn't help thinking of a tune from the *Haggadah*, sung tonight after a full, leisurely Passover meal:

Then came the butcher and slaughtered the ox
That drank the water
That smothered the fire
That burned the stick
That beat the dog
That bit the cat
That ate the kid
My father bought for two zuzim
Chad godya, Chad godya.

I fell asleep hearing the tune, and worrying about Cha Nan.

Her Blast Count went down. 70, 50, 36, 27, 11, 4, 1 . . . then one day, zero.

"No blasts, Cha Nan! I think we're winning!" Said through blue paper masks, our white coats tenting around her so she entirely disappeared, as half a dozen stethoscopes clattered together on her sweaty back. "Listen!" said Larry. I listened. "You hear that? A new pleural rub." Her blasts were down but so were all her white cells. You or I have five or ten thousand floating through our vessels, squeezing through the sinusoids of our spleens, crawling among our bodily organs. She had six hundred, four hundred, three hundred. And platelets given her burst in her veins. Once half a million, now fifteen thousand was the best we could manage. She coughed more daily. On x-ray a white haze took refuge in the back gutter of her right lung. Not even the triple antibiotics—acronymically K, G & C—made it disappear, made her, talking about her father who was working illegally in the city making trousers, able to control the paroxysms of coughing. I felt helpless as a country doctor of the old days with his bleeding bowls and jars of leeches. Whenever I came in, Maureen or another nurse was trying to start an IV in Cha

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Nan's battered arms. Every vein-stick hurt, and every new IV blew under the corrosion of K, G & C or of 6-TG and Ara-C. The blood we dripped in could not replace what oozed out. Cardiac surgeons came to try placing a central line so Cha Nan would not have to get stuck so often for bloods and IV's. But they failed. "Anomalous venous system," they wrote. "Will try other side next week." Cha Nan was always crying.

Then the husband showed up: a small, embarrassed-looking ex-GI with a pointy chin and the look of a ferret or a weasel surprised at his kill. And with him he brought Charlotte, the little girl. Charlotte had Cha Nan's black hair, and an exquisite timidity. Passing the room I would see her, mask in hand, climbing on Cha Nan's belly. The room, when I entered it, which was more and more rarely, smelled vaguely rotten from the food her husband bought. I wondered just where he had been all this time.

I avoided her. Kübler-Ross may have an explanation of my conduct, in terms of an effort to minimize impending loss; all I know is that the second cycle of 6-TG and Ara-C ended, and Cha Nan looked worse than ever, and Med III team made briefer and more perfunctory rounds on her. And when alone, often I would just pass by the room, rather than poke my head inside with the latest white count or to ask about the letter for Cha Nan's father. I had dictated it: "To whom it may concern; Cha Nan Chen is a patient of ours at the University Medical Center, with the diagnosis of Acute Myelogenous Leukemia, and is unable to leave the hospital. . . ." Yet it had not arrived from Dictation. Somewhere on the way from telephone to typewriter to ward, those words for the old Chinese man had disappeared.

And so had her cells. Everything stayed down: blasts, white cells, red cells, platelets. I knew why I avoided her. There were no stem cells left.

3.

Now when I look back and try to unravel the events of those despairing days, I find somewhat clearer patterns. But still, fragments, confusions. The decision to treat her was, of course, not mine. I had some limited say in it. But I took on the burden for the whole Med III team and five consulting services as my own. As if I were responsible not only for the failure of her treatment but for the presence of her disease. I began to have the horrible suspicion that we were shortening her life, that our vigorous treatment was just killing her more quickly than her disease itself. The anguish of seeing her every day convinced me beyond suspicion, even beyond the facts. I worked harder on my other patients: a nineteen year old kid with testicular seminoma, a Mexican lady with ovarian cancer, a fifty-eight year old man who had sprayed asbestos in a World War II shipyard and now had mesothelioma, an old Swede with cancer of the prostate, a Greek surgeon, Dr. Odysseus, with non-Hodgkin's Lymphoma. All were ill, all but the nineteen year old would eventually die of their cancer, yet our work could give them something: time. But Cha Nan, no. And I avoided her.

Anyone who is sick or who treats sick patients today knows that the doctor is not a curer but an odds-player, trying to heal more disease than he causes. He is no longer the powerless observer; with the "big gun" antibiotics, anticancer drugs, and so on, which often have horrific side effects, he is inevitably made part of the disease. The doctor must maintain composure both against the knowledge that every treatment is to some degree Russian roulette, and against the patient's blind hope for cure. Each is dangerous. Insulin "saves" the diabetic from early death only to make crippled blind amputees on dialysis; phenothiazines alleviate schizophrenia but make some patients into writhing, wheelchair-bound freaks. Halothane for anesthesia, phenylbutazone for arthritis can kill your liver dead. There is no shortage of other examples for the cynical doctor, for the patient chary of treatment. The death of Cha Nan Chen is one small example of the paradox of medicine in twentieth century America: the doctor's helpless retreat from the effects of his own therapeutic "armamentarium." It is no accident that, as Sontag says, ". . . recently the fight against cancer has sounded like a colonial war. . . ." When and how do you pull out? And what of the ensuing collapse?

It was a relief to let her die.

She told me first, one Saturday morning when I came in to find her feverish as usual: "David, I don't want any more."

"Hematology wants to try once more," I said. "With the Ara-C and 6-TG." Though silently I doubted whether they had even seen her. For in their note they recommended another bone marrow too: "to assess our progress."

"*They* want," she said.

"They think that . . ."

"No."

The next day, Med III discussed her again, sitting in our conference room with her latest numbers up on the blackboard. Nobody had much to say.

"So we're pulling back?" I said at the end.

Dr. B. nodded. "She's finished," he said. "Up her morphine dose, stop her K, G and C, her blood products. If her IV falls out, keep it out. Agreed?"

Afterwards I went to see her. At the foot of the bed sat her father, a shrivelled Chinese with bushy gray hair. The letter that had gotten lost, that I had not dictated again, gnawed at me. Cha Nan's husband, unshaven, had the Sunday newspaper on his lap. Cha Nan lay in bed, eyes open enough only to show whites, and she breathed only every six or eight seconds, with shudders each time. Cheynes-Stokes respirations, a terminal pattern, evidence of brain damage . . . she was Cheynes-Stoking and they were sitting and watching her go. I called to her. She startled awake, wide-eyed, and stared at me.

"Go outside," she told her husband, "Go, go." And the same to her father in Chinese. She watched them leave before speaking again.

"I am tired," she said. "I want to go, David. Do you understand, I want to go?"

"To go, Cha Nan?"

"I am tired, so tired. Can you let me go?"

She was flushed, sweaty, in the close-aired room, with me and the newspapers and the IV bottles, and the heavy presence of death. It reminded me of nothing so much as a scene from a novel or a play, something one cannot believe could exist outside of art—the certainty of her desire for death, her impassioned clarity after days of somnolence and fever.

"All right, Cha Nan," I said. And her eyes closed.

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At the nursing station, I was writing an order to increase her morphine to fifteen milligrams every two to three hours when Larry came by. He read over my shoulder.

"That isn't enough. Give her thirty."

I scratched out and rewrote.

He nudged me. "You're writing an order to kill that lady."

"I know."

"How's it feel?"

I looked at the order, in my crabbed handwriting. Larry pushed up against me, his weightlifter's bulk close.

"Lousy," I said. "Co-sign it."

"Give me your pen."

Later I came back into the room. It was the last day of my sub-internship, and I had been going around to my dozen patients, writing off-service notes and making sure all unfinished business would be followed up. Again I had dictated the letter for Cha Nan's father. I asked Maureen how Cha Nan was.

"I gave her thirty of morphine. Her family's in there again. She's talking with them."

"She's a brave lady," I said. "She knows, she really knows it's all over." I entered the room. Small dark people surrounded Cha Nan—her father, husband, three women I hadn't seen before. And she was Cheynes-Stoking with such shuddering finality that I was scared each breath would be her last one.

I touched her arm; she jolted awake.

"Oh! I feel so good!" Eyes wide open, staring black and unblinking, surveyed us.

"You were talking and fell asleep," said her husband.

"I thought . . . I thought I was dead," she said, in awe of us and herself. "I was dead—but look, I am not. I feel so good, so strong now. Oh I'm so happy, I'm not dead."

I told her about the letter, which had taken a peculiar importance to me, as if it were some sort of contract or waiver of responsibility; and it was a great relief to touch her hand, to hear: "Thank you, David."

Then she said, "I have to talk. Listen to what I have to say." And spoke in Chinese to her family. I left her wide-eyed, unnaturally alert but opiated beyond pain. It was ten p.m. that Sunday night before I finished off-service notes and headed home.

The next morning, beginning my Hematology rotation, I was assigned two of my Oncology patients as consults: Dr. Odysseus, the Greek surgeon with lymphoma dying far from Athens, and Cha Nan. When I came by the nursing station to check her chart, one of the nurses, not Maureen, told me Cha Nan had just died.

"That's good," I said.

I went down the hall. Perhaps she had just died, victim to her third disease contracted in treatment of the second, contracted in treatment of the first, a *Chad Godya* of illness begun with "one kid, one kid" of Hodgkin's Disease and culminating in a slow and agonized yielding to the Angel of Death (who had yet to yield to "the Holy One, blessed be He"). But already the low cart, disguised to look like a linen hamper, and the pointy-faced husband, and shrivelled father, and the three dark short women had gone. I headed toward the room of Dr. Odysseus, still living, still dying. □

LYN LIFSHIN

AFTER A DAY WE STAY IN BED TILL THE SUN IS CLOSE TO SETTING

he drives home
thru the black trees
with the poem a
bout me that will
make him famous
starting in his
fingers he wishes
the wheel were his
Olympia typewriter
he needs to get my
hair where he can
touch it on the long
drive thru the pine
trees my musk still
drenching the car
I want to read
this poem almost
as much dazed the
double night per
formance has sucked
me flat and pale
as an empty sheet
of non erasable
bond has pulled
all color all the
wet moist verbs
out the way he took
the stories I told
and made them in
to his own surreal
dreams even my
leaves and branches
became the green
arms of a child
My mouth is dry I
need to have his
poem where my clove
nipples press into his
blue striped cotton
smelling of sun
and wind in the pine
trees a mirror that
will reflect my dark
eyes I need this as
much as he needs to
invent me to
become himself

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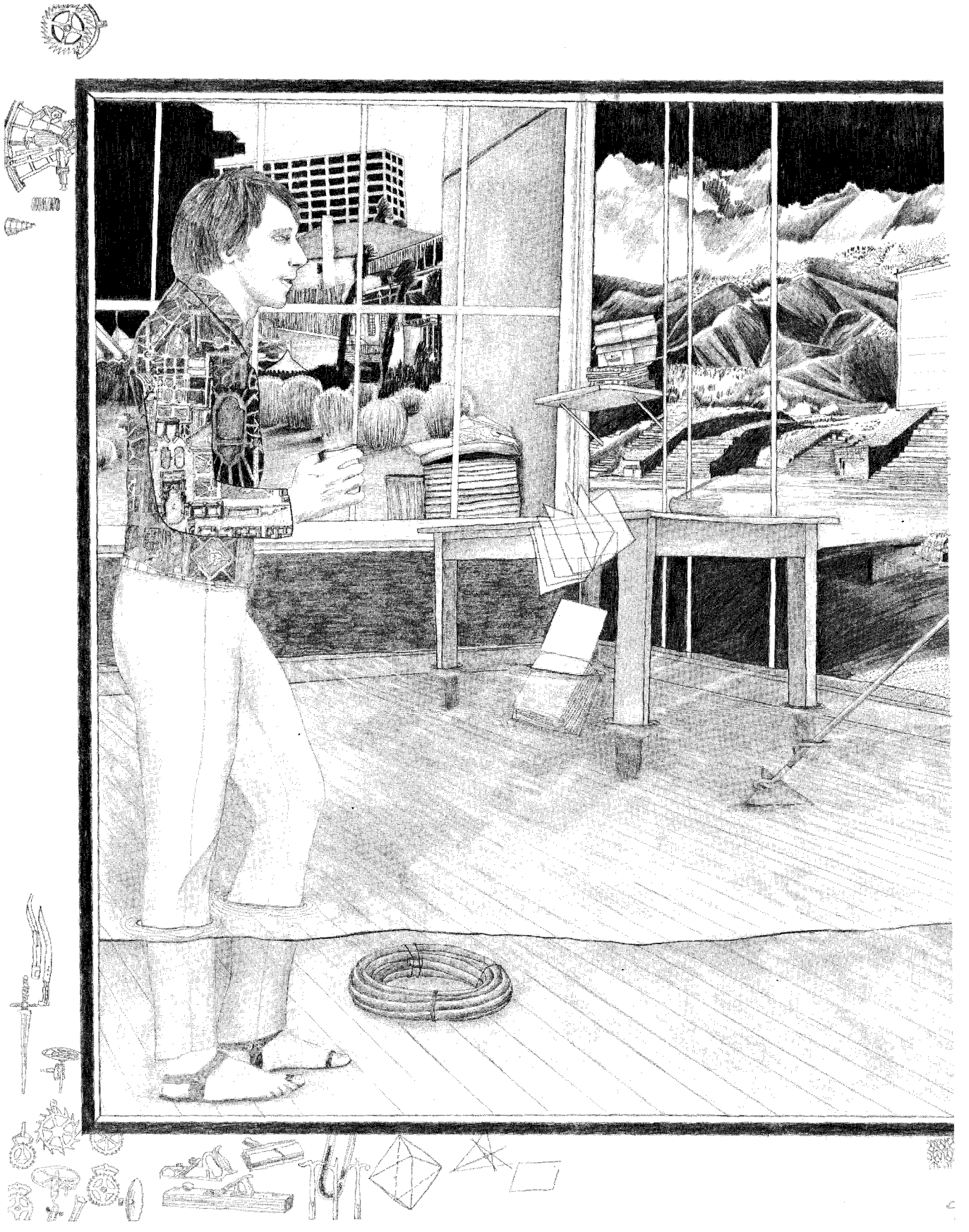

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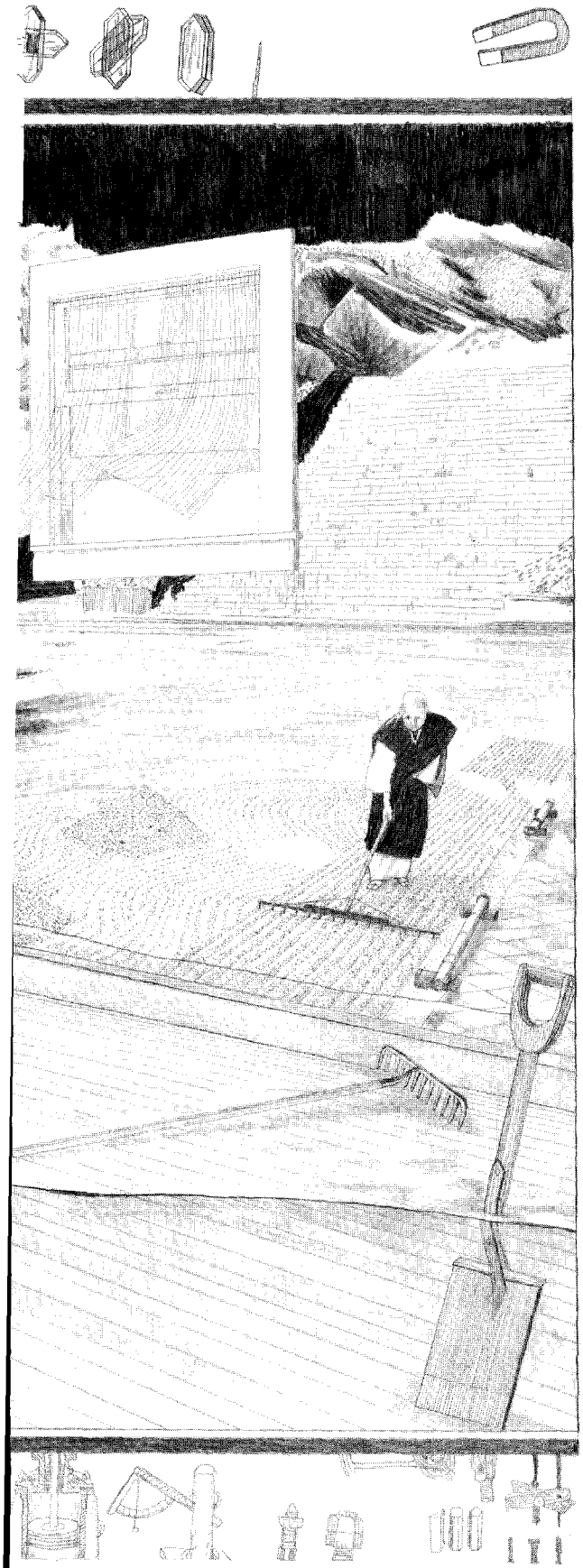

Pamela Scesniak

THE LOVER OF WORDS

Barry Lopez

You must understand something the other way around first: he was a common gardener. He was Mexican and he lived in the barrio of East Los Angeles, and though his profession came to him inexorably, father to son, his awareness of a world apart from his menial labors was both sublime and pervasive. He was a reader of fictions, in English and Spanish. He was thirty-one, unmarried, different, and preoccupied with words, not as a linguist might be but only as an autodidact would be: he understood the power of words to draw forth feeling and to mesmerize. He understood how words healed.

He did not conceive his existence, as a well-read man whose sense of affluence came as easily from an encounter with a felicitous phrase as it did among roses, as anomalous, for his perceptions were not directed that way. Nothing in his own mind told him his life was either eccentric or incongruous; he was not aware that the idea of his existence was clichéd. So whatever objection there was to him—haughty regard in a clerk who waited with him at a bus stop while he read *The Autumn of the Patriarch*—took place beyond him. He was astute enough to have developed a hedgerow, pleasant as lilacs, that separated him from engaging conversation with employers and most Anglos. But he did not apprehend it as a barrier, for he had no inclination to dwell on contrivance in life, or the reasons for it. He was in touch with subtle currents only to preserve an undisturbed life.

Several things were important to him. He did not wish to lead an eleemosynary existence. He did not wish to be distracted from ritual, either from the cultivation of plants in the shaded gardens of Beverly Hills or from sequence in a life of readings, whereby one book leads by diaphanous but ineluctable threads to the next. But these were not

BARRY LOPEZ is presently polishing a short story collection to be published this fall by Scribner's.

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ideas in his mind; he was as ingenuous with himself as he was with everyone he met. And preternaturally quiet; there was a haunting quietude both inside and outside him, and in the penumbra of this order one might have expected wild beasts to be as tractable as daffodils.

He was not unaware; he accepted the servitude and the iniquity of his position apart from the living of his life. He understood racism but his spirit was not crushed by it. He had found, in the same way a tree sends its roots down in search of water and its limbs to find light, a plane of alignment, and he was partly invisible in it. He nourished himself with words and he took another kind of sustenance, as necessary, from daily contact with the soil.

He had found, by a subterranean and labyrinthine route, some way around hatred, too, so that his anger in the face of cravenness and savagery was no less but he was not obsessed with revenge or rectitude. He slept deeply; he read at dawn, with a cup of Jamaican coffee, in a quality of light that moved him on occasion as deeply as the words in his lap. Yet he was not conscious of escape.

He appreciated the quality and design of his tools and was solicitous after them. He was expert in the repair of machinery. And he wrote poetry in the evening, against a breeze from the window. It was not brilliant poetry, for he could not effect the transition from what he admired to what he wrote, but this did not cross his mind. The lines were never insipid, the emotions never exaggerated. He tended to them with the same care with which he gardened, but not the same industry; and here lay his sense of humor, and balance. He was bemused by his failures, occasionally angered but never moved to despair.

He knew several women, with whom he sometimes spent the night and in whose company he would almost emerge from the chrysalis of his life. He was not bothered by thoughts of loneliness or wasted time or ambitionless existence or any of the other pronouncements made more on his life than to his person by his employers. He was in their view only a peculiar and ingratiating Mexican, to be impugned as one would speak distractedly of the weather.

As long as he was at a remove from such people he was untouched by their condescension and presumption; and he attended carefully to this remove.

At an all but unfathomable depth in his spirit, however, there lay an irreducible idea, medieval and adamantine, about the replicating quality of metaphor and the physical revelation of abstract ideas. As he tended to his bushes and plants, to the trimming of lawns and hillsides of ivy, he drew himself along in a world of cultivated ideas, trimmed and watered as expeditiously, from which arose an atmosphere as salubrious.

As a stone waits millenia to trip a certain horse on a well-worn path, so now did this convergence between ideas and work begin to take shape in his mind, to cross over a threshold, become real, and occupy him.

One day, his brown arms girdling a load of palm fronds and pausing mid-step, as if trying to remember something, aware of the sweep of ineffable evening color behind him, he grasped a passing vision of destruction. He walked up the hill thinking of tulip bulbs.

The unraveling of himself was like the retreat of a tide, an undeniable movement but not apparent at any particular moment. Only with reference to the same points could he be sure of the change. He found himself wishing his poetry were more accomplished; he ruminated while he worked about the rudeness and unexamined prejudice of the children of his employers. He found cupidity in himself, and became aware of a vague resentment toward his surroundings. He developed a mean-spirited attitude toward what he read and realized he had a capacity for smugness. He had never, in all his life, been so aware of himself. And he suspected it was this preoccupation that began to exacerbate so severely his sense of drowning.

Once outside himself and thus an observer he became lost. Each of his actions took on such metaphysical weight he was hamstrung by the simplest tasks. Trimming rose bushes, once a graceful movement with him, was now a desultory and inefficient feint. The mechanical exigencies of lawnmowers defeated him. Food lost its taste. He stopped reading.

The more he thought the more unhinged he became, until finally he believed he must speak with someone. Of the women he knew only one could help, and all she could do was offer him her belief in his spirit, and it was not enough for him.

No one, he realized, could understand the unfolding of his predicament because he had not taken anyone in.

He thought to arrest his downward movement—which baffled and angered him because it proceeded without reason, and he had become too acutely aware of the role of reason in people's lives—by discipline. He set back to reading. He alloted a certain number of books he would read each week. Words he did not know he made lists of, so he would be sure to look them up. His therapeutic attempt to reclaim his self-possessed and undisturbed self was mirrored for him in the gardens he tended; he made judgments on his state and wondered at his progress by studying the movement of his hands among the flowers. How deft? he would ask himself. How portentous? he would ask, and so continue in his own self destruction.

One afternoon he was cogitating over a word he had encountered that morning, and become enamoured of immediately because it was a word that he had felt captured for a moment in its definition the meaning of his condition: sharawadji, a graceful disorder. As one fans a deck of cards he fanned this notion out in his mind until in the farrago of ideas he saw himself as metaphysically disheveled but still presentable (even more conscious now of being Mexican) as well as the irony of neat gardens, deeply rooted, surrounding the houses of superficial people in moral disarray (thus did he tap his own bigotry). On another day, after he had entered a period of self pity, he dwelled on the word ahimsa, the doctrine of respect for all living things. And thus did he develop scruples about the rights of aphids and the crying of mown grass. And one evening after work, taking a chance that would not have occurred to him a month before, he entered a guest house and with his list of words began paging through a large dictionary which lay as inert as aspic on a wrought iron floor stand. The owner stepped in on him; he was apologetic and properly obsequious but it was clear almost immediately that something else was required. He at-

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tempted an explanation. His nervousness, his clothing, his accent all undid him; what he hoped would pass for erudition suddenly seemed only stupidity. As he held out the list in desperation he realized it resembled something cribbed and illegal, and a penetrating sense of injustice arrived. Tact held him to a sense of irony. His rage precipitated only a wry smile.

The loss of other jobs followed in what he later saw as a predictable escalation of the moral and metaphysical layering he had indulged. He had never, to his mind, indulged himself before. But he was now bereft of that innocence and he besieged himself with endless mental explications, and scruples that seemed silly even to him, which made him angrier.

In this state he allowed himself, as it were, to sleep with the devil. He accepted unemployment checks and argued with his neighbors, cursing their Mexican traits and otherwise giving evidence of self-directed anger and, of course, his pain. Concern over the state of his deprivation, the collapse of his virtue and the lassitude that accompanied his depression no longer occupied his mind.

What saved him principally, however, was his belief in physical equivalents, his intuition that under another set of circumstances, contrived but sincere, he could set himself right. For this single reason he went to his father. The father regarded the son as dangerously imaginative and was suspicious of his impenetrable privacy. For years he thought his son a homosexual. He projected impertinence on him and accused him sharply of cowardice. All this flew over the son as would have the release of so many frantic doves. He sought his father's idea of a place he might go. He explained that he had to get away. He didn't mean to be taken cryptically and was sure after he said it that his father would interpret the request perversely. Nevertheless, it was a son and a father. His father told him to visit an uncle in Yuma, a clerk in a motel.

He hugged his son, abruptly but firmly, when he left.

He expected to be gone a while, to find a job, to spend a few weeks in the mountains to the north. He was fortunate in that he took none of these plans seriously; he simply expected to do whatever was necessary to obliterate a sense of himself. The repressed bigotry in Yuma give him an edge to work against. His uncle went out each evening dressed with a Mexican sense of fastidiousness, and was largely absent. The closeness of the border bred malevolence and suspicion. Tourists wandered the streets as if in a state of forgetfulness. None of this touched him. Only the sense that he was removed from the gardens of Beverly Hills and that he was Mexican and that he enjoyed reading; and certain knowledge that there would be other bends in the river as dangerous for him further on.

The room in which he stayed took a breeze in the morning. The afternoon light was indirect and seemed to hover in the room. Suddenly one day he was taken with appreciation at the sight of his hard, blunt thumbs against the white pages of a book. The afternoon heat hung in suspension in the air and he felt a delicateness in his belly. He thought of the inscrutable life buried in a wheelbarrow full of bulbs, of the sound of his spade going into the earth, and of his cleverness with water.

He turned pages, and read on. □

ELIZABETH HODGES

BLUE RIDGE

In the mountains, there is more than slate
and red clay. There are more vivid images
than this: the sunset and twisted limbs
of pear trees against the sky. There is
tobacco. A stone chimney. Old clapboard
place. An ice house. Caverns of time
and space. Slowly, the narrow road winds
into the hills, the arbor of trees comforting
in their natural confines, and, then, with
just one turn, the ceiling disappears and
I am engulfed in a past that has no dimensions.
Figures bob between the rows in the field,
shadows against the wall. Once, there was
a cabin beside the chimney; already it is
buried with its persona. Hand tools
and bottles. Songs in the wind. As it
whistles through the broken windows of
the ice house, I listen from where I stand
rigid in the corner. I have reached the edge.
I am afraid of what the dark might hold
if I lose my footing. Sighs in the wood. *Fear*
is for the unknown. You have nowhere else
to go. There is no place you would rather be.
You cannot rest unless you be here. Another
shadow that will pass.

T.R. HUMMER

SHADOW IN THE AIR

Lunar eclipse, March,1977

This moment was foretold to me: the face
Of the moon goes dim, curdled like milk laced
with vinegar,
And the night-drunk owl I answered for hours falls
Silent suddenly. And now I am left with nothing
But my own prophesies to tell me what is to come:

Shadow of the earth, darkness hidden in darkness,
Song of a night-bird caught in its own echo—
Things I have always known, just as I always
Know each moment of my life only the moment
before
It fades in its own incalculable shadow.

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Roy Behrens

highway

PETER CORODIMAS

Mother rubs chrome polish on the radio knobs while I spray Windex on the back windows and buff them with paper towels supplied along the way. Father drives. We are going east or west this time. Yesterday we were going north, I think. Father is fifty-five. Mother, who will drive in a few minutes, is forty-nine. I, their only child, conceived in wanderlust, am seventeen turning eighteen some miles down the road. The car will be a year old, and we will be happy to see it go. The machine has given us a lot of pleasure, but you get tired of anything after a while.

Whenever we leave a service station, Father always drives first, because he's the strongest and his fist packs a wallop. Mother takes the wheel a hundred miles later, or

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PETER CORODIMAS lives in upstate New York, and has contributed earlier fiction to this magazine.

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screams. My turn, when I'm lucky enough to get it, comes a hundred miles after hers. That's the way we've worked things out.

The smile lines around Father's eyes and cheeks are as tight as they can get. He can't go much longer. Mother knows this: she stops polishing and watches the digits 1234567890 roll around on the gauge. She begins to twitch at 77090.5 miles. Her fingers move toward the wheel but Father's quick elbow bounces her hand against the dome light.

"Not yet," he says.

"You were going off the road," she says. "I was preventing an accident."

Mother knows all the tricks, but Father knows more.

"Just crowding the shoulder," he says.

"Stop laughing," Mother tells me. "Stop it!"

"I can't help myself," I say. "Father really knows the tricks."

Father always gets his hundred miles, and sometimes more. Raw speed's his style. On curves he loves to hug that shoulder. What did Father do before this? He doesn't say, and I don't ask anymore. He says, "I've always had a notion to travel." He's seen it all, and then some.

"You comfortable back there?" he asks.

"I sure am," I say.

I sit in the middle of the back seat so that I can watch the mileage and the sides of Mother's and Father's faces. That's what I'm doing now: sitting in the back and chewing toothpicks. The picks I get from restaurants whenever we stop for a bite. We eat, take pictures with the Polaroid, and then Father says: "Okay, let's move it out!" and we go.

On this trip I have pictures of the restaurants—the Burger Kings, the Howard Johnson places, the Pizza Huts . . . all here in this cardboard file. Father, he likes to snap service stations. Mother's specialty this time around is restrooms.

Mother shoves the chrome polish in the glove compartment. She's really beginning to smile now. I'm next. She unfolds a new roadmap and spreads it across her lap. Her fingers twitch.

A tandem truck swooshes by, and the car sways.

"Sweet Jesus," Father says. His eyes look back from the mirror. "See that?"

"Boyoboy, did I see it!" I say.

"Those tires were sizzling," he says.

"A sizzler," I say.

"Look," says Mother. "Quick. Look at the Greyhound."

"Greyhound, horehound," Father says.

I turn and watch the Greyhound go in the direction we came from. "That's a nice bus."

"I'm impressed," Mother says.

"Me too," I say.

"The people all waved," Mother says. "They waved and smiled."

"Makes you want to follow their trail, they're having so much fun," says Father.

"Yes," says Mother.

"Me too," I say.

Father drives his foot against the brake and swerves into a U-turn that takes our breath away and forces me against the door. Mother, laughing, has her face pressed flat against the window.

Now the highway stretches ahead of us.

"There," says Father.

"Having fun?" Mother asks.

"Certainly," he says. I hear his hand smack Mother's thigh. "It's great out here, and I'm happy."

"Everybody's having fun," I shout, looking back at the U-Haul we're towing. An ironing board is about to go.

The map crackles under Mother's fingers as she traces the colored lines. "I know I'm having a good time," she says.

"Me too," I say. "Don't go forgetting about me."

The car veers onto soft shoulder and I look around in time to see the ironing board bounce off the trailer. "Hey," I say, "we just lost two blankets and an ironing board!"

"*Whooo-ie!*" Father screams. "Pioneers of the road! We moving out or not?"

"That we are!" cries Mother.

"We're on our way!" I scream from the back.

"Soon," Father says.

"Hey!" says Mother, touching her face to the steering wheel to look at the mileage. "My turn. Now."

I'm next.

Father resists, but the strain shows, and he is no match for us both. "Stop hitting my head," he yells, and Mother's laughter is like a corkscrew in my ear.

The mileage gauge now reads 77136.7 and Mother is driving, her lips stretched into a 36.7 smile. I sit beside her. Father, who has taken my place in back, is rubbing his eyes and trying to get his mouth into shape. His photo album is beside his leg, Mother's is shoved under the seat where she thinks no one will find it.

In a few seconds I unroll a paper towel and start dusting the front seat. I'm so close to the steering wheel I can almost slip my hand out of the towel and touch it. I move in that direction, but Mother's hand spiders down.

"A dirtspot," I tell her.

"Don't," she says.

I'm tempted to try anyway. As Father would say, "It's just a matter of timing."

"Don't look now, buckaroos," Father suddenly yells, "but the mahogany bookcase fell off." His body is twisted toward the rear window, his elbow propped against the top of the back seat. "We're going to lose a mattress and a rocker pretty soon." He makes a satisfied clucking noise deep in his throat.

Cripes, it's a pretty sight. Drawers fall and scatter on both sides of the highway. One slides along as if the road was paved with butter.

"There's plenty more where that came from," Father says, and laughter sends him sprawling backward.

I feel happiness, lots of happiness, expanding in my head.

Looking back, I can see the mattress and the rocker inching toward the open tailgate. The flounced shade of a

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floor lamp vibrates in the windwake of the car. It'll be the next to go. Suddenly clothes—Father's Sunday suit, Mother's pink seersucker blouse, my Levi's—stream out of a trunk and flutter like banners above the trailer before dropping to the road far behind us.

"Nice!" says Father. "Very nice."

"Nice-aroo!"

"I thought the entire trunk would drop off!" shrieks Mother. "But to see clothes take off like that . . . that was a pleasant surprise."

My heart is pounding.

Now the lampshade goes. A quilt swirls in the air, uncovering a refrigerator. Then—very nice—a bedroom slipper zooms out of an open drawer, so fast we can't identify the owner.

"Whose was that?" Father says.

"I think it was a fuzzy one," Mother says.

I say: "We'll never know unless we stop and look."

"No!" screams Father.

"Never!" cries Mother.

It is a little joke we have. There is no stopping to go back. We stop to go forward—the merest pause at restaurant or service station.

Mother slows down, then accelerates quickly, and the refrigerator topples like a tombstone. She zigzags, and a coatrack tilts overboard. She's good, this mother of mine.

"I love it!" she cries.

"Me too," I say.

Father's hand grips my shoulder. "Son," he says, "give me those last pictures I took."

I get them from the glove compartment, glossy and stiff as a new deck of cards. Once they go into Father's album, they stay there: we never see them again.

"Anybody mind if I take a peek? You've seen some of mine."

"It's okay with me," Mother says. "Let's all look at them."

"That's because they're not your pictures," Father sighs.

The photographs are good this time. The details are clear. You can see the individual bricks fronting the Shell station. The yellow rotating sign gleams against the big blue sky.

"Start hogging the pictures and you start walking," Father says.

"He's impressionable," Mother says.

"Just as long as that little zygote doesn't hog everything in sight," Father says.

"This one is splendid," I say, and the picture goes from me to Mother to Father.

"Faster," Father says.

A Texaco is next. A beauty. The brick facing is a deep rust-red, and sloping above it, the cedar-shake siding. The sign is white and red against the big blue sky.

More go to Mother, then over her shoulder to Father. I have already slipped three into my shirt. One belongs to Mother, but got mixed in with Father's. It shows a restroom: shiny steel, bright porcelain, spotless tile.

"There's a dog near the Phillips 66," says Mother. "Anybody see the dog get in there?"

Father is happy about a telephone booth in the Arco picture, and says so. He is pasting them in the album. Texaco with Texaco. Mobil with Mobil.

"What did you think of the restrooms at the last place?" Mother asks.

Father runs his fingers along the edge of a photograph. "A little grime around the sink. Some water spots on the mirror. Full waste basket."

Mother rolls her eyes. "I felt the same way, and said so on one of those cards."

"Me too."

Mother shakes her head.

"Let's see the pictures you took," I say.

"Those are mine!" Mother says. "They're already mounted."

Father is laughing. I turn and see him with my pictures, which I thought were beside me.

"No!" I say.

But already my mouth begins to twitch. I drop the rest of Father's pictures and check the mileage. Sure enough: 77190.1. The smile is forming. As usual, first the spasm, then the urgent steady stretching of the lips. I squeeze Mother's arm: "Get ready for a change!"

Mother falls back, exhausted: I jam my foot on the accelerator and look into the mirror.

"Not yet," Father says. "Wait till she's out of the seat."

It is not quite dark. The roadsigns and telephone poles are pointing long shadows in the direction I have chosen to go. Mother is in back now, rubbing her mouth. Father sits beside me. The mileage reads 77285.8, and whenever I touch fingers to my mouth I feel teeth where my lips are still parting. A station wagon loaded with bumper stickers passed us moments ago going in the opposite direction, and I have been wondering where those people are off to.

We may be missing something.

Pieces of furniture shift and groan on the trailer, and I glance over my shoulder in time to catch sight of the kitchen table shedding its legs behind us.

"Anybody see that one? That sonofagun of a kitchen table just flew out like it had wings. Hey. Wake up! We parted company with the kitchen table. And books. Look at those pages flapping around! Doesn't anybody care?"

Mother whispers: "We could always stop."

"Oh ho! You hear that, Father? You hear what the lady in back is trying to tell us? 'We could always *stop*,' she says."

"Never," Father says hoarsely. A smile bends his mouth.

I look down and see his fingers gripping the lower rim of the steering wheel.

"No!" I say.

I push his face until the hand falls away.

Sweet clatter of plastic plates. Now a bathroom scale slides off. The mileage reads 77302.6, and we have a long way to go. I check my face in the mirror and see teeth.

More furniture teeters, then falls. An armchair cartwheels, cartwheels after us, its direction our direction until its momentum runs out. □

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Every Day A Visitor

Richard Abrons

K. Dyble Thompson

Grossman thinks he is Arthur Burns. He parts his hair in the middle, puffs on his tobaccoless pipe, and talks about the money supply. At dinner, he warns Feltenstein about too much aid to the Middle East. "We're running a trade deficit of over thirty billion right now," he says. "That leaves no room for your adventures. Pass the salt."

Feltenstein is short with dark, curly hair. He is a natural for Kissinger, but diplomacy is not one of his strong points. "You make me sick," he sneers at Grossman. "You can reach the salt yourself."

"The salt talks are breaking down," chortles Figliozzo, and smiles for approval. Figliozzo makes a joke out of everything. He is very bright, and he is our only Italian, in fact, our only non-Jew, since this is a Jewish home for the aged. I made him mayor of New York in honor of La Guardia. I remember La Guardia as the best mayor New York ever had, but maybe Figliozzo would have been just as good. He wants to combine the police, firemen, and sanitation workers into one group that will collect garbage, clean the streets, and at the same time handle crime and traffic and watch out for fires. He figures that would eliminate ten thousand jobs and save the City over one hundred million dollars. I think it's a great idea. He also is for extending card playing from ten-thirty to eleven. This I'm not crazy about, because by ten-thirty I'm tired out, and glad to see them in their rooms.

I come on at five and stay through the night. I got the job through Doctor Shapiro after my heart attack. He donates two hours every Saturday morning to the home. "It's easy work, Bob" he told me. "You can't lift heavy packages at the warehouse anymore. Besides, you like people, and you're getting on in years yourself. The young attendants have no patience." I waited six months until I was fifty-five and eligible for early retirement under our pension plan. I do like people, but, in the beginning, I didn't have much respect for these old codgers. They were so selfish and angry. They kept complaining to me about each other, about the food, about the rules, about the attendants, about everything. Feltenstein would tell me almost every day what his wife, Becky, said shortly before she passed away. "Don't let them put you in a home, Felty. Stay in the apartment. Get a companion. I won't be jealous. You could even show her my recipes in the kitchen drawer." I wished he had followed her advice.

The worst used to be at supper, and afterwards at cards, when the ladies troop over from their hall to the common dining and card rooms. Mrs. Marcus is the ringleader. She is a large woman with dyed blonde hair, and face and eyes caked with makeup. She has a thing for Grossman, because she thinks he has class, and she turns up her nose at everybody else. She and Grossman play bridge with Mrs. Levy and Davidowitz, while the others play canasta or watch TV. She would accuse Davidowitz of peeking at her cards, or worse, playing footsie under the table, looking to Grossman for support. There wasn't much Grossman could do. He is a small, mild man with glasses and an intellectual air. Davidowitz is over six feet and used to be a union official with District Sixty-Five. I made her Bella Abzug and Davidowitz Secretary of Labor. Mrs. Levy is nice enough, but she has poor control over her rectal and urinary functions. I put her in charge of the environment.

I got the idea for all this suddenly one night when I saw the President's cabinet on TV sitting around an oval table that reminded me of our long dining room table. Why not? I thought. It'll give them something else to talk about besides their aches and grievances. The next day I gave out roles. It didn't matter that Burns and Kissinger had left the government. I followed my instincts. Some of them took to it right away. Grossman immediately parted his hair in the middle and spoke of raising the interest rate on the dollar seventy-five that Davidowitz owed him from last night's bridge game. Feltenstein was secretly pleased, but wouldn't admit it. "What would Becky say?" he asked. "Here she worries about me going to a home, and now I'm Secretary State!"

The next night we have our first formal meeting after dinner is cleared away. I bring yellow legal pads and pencils for each place. Details are important when you want people to believe. Mrs. Marcus says it's all stupid and, besides, she deserves to be in the cabinet, but when she sees how seriously Grossman is taking it, she goes and gets her hat with the artificial flowers and perches it on her blonde curls. "I warn you," she booms, "one of these days I'm going to run for President."

"So who's President now?" asks Mrs. Levy.

I'd given this a lot of thought. "Stoopak," I announce. They hoot and jeer. I expected that. Stoopak is senile, and keeps mostly to his room. He often forgets where he is and who is there with him. Every now and then he engages someone in violent argument over something in his past. Once he angrily accused Davidowitz of putting a second mortgage in his name that belonged to the two of them. "I never should have taken you for a partner," he said.

RICHARD ABRONS is a New York City financial consultant devoting more and more time to fiction. His story "Tintinnabulation" appeared in the December 1979 NAR.

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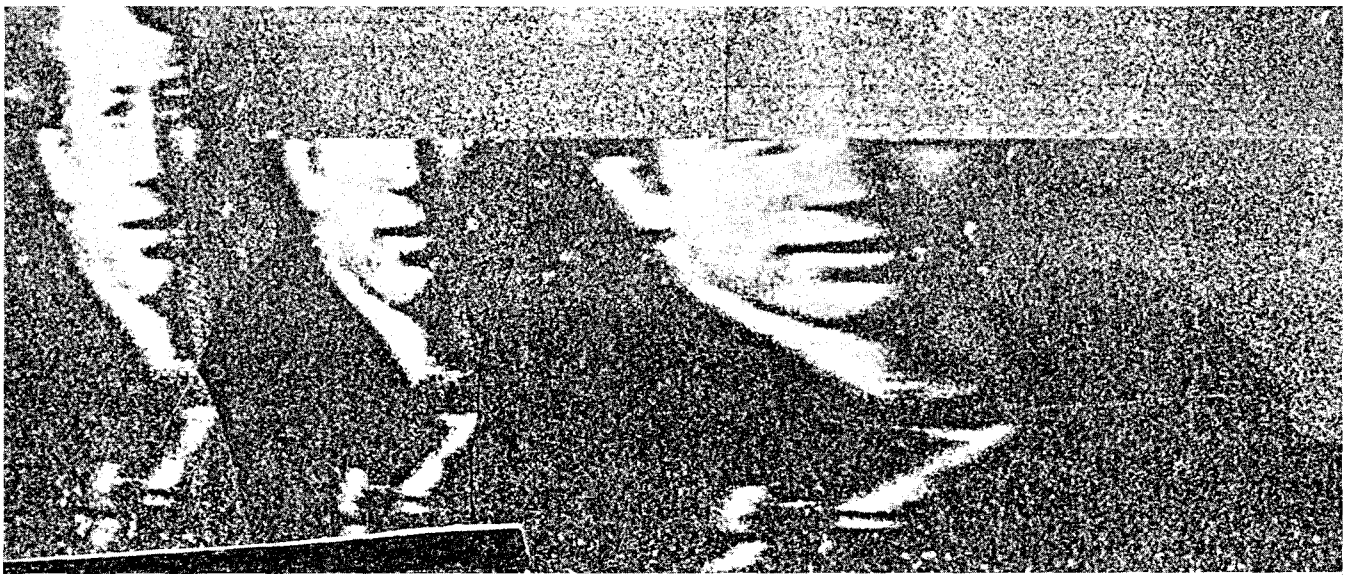

"So dissolve," said Davidowitz. "And get lost."

Stoopak had a stroke that left his throat partially paralyzed, and often at meals the food he had just put down would come flying up to shower the person across from him. In fairness, I had to rotate who sat in that opposite chair. I figured he was best for President, because nobody would be jealous, and it might do him good, and get him out of his room. If old people lie around too much, they just kind of sink, and then they get sick, and that's the end of it—before it has to be.

Well, they are scoffing at the idea of Stoopak, when in he walks, wearing a blue suit with a white shirt and a green tie that doesn't match at all. He takes a seat at the head of the table. "Start the meeting," he orders.

"Mr. President," asks Figliozzo, "do you know who I am?"

I had briefed Stoopak for a good half hour, and then left a list with him that included descriptions, even though he sees these people every day.

"You're Mayor La Guardia and don't nobody ask such silly questions," Stoopak answers, vigorously pointing his finger. "And you," he says, moving the finger to Davidowitz, "you're a cheat, and I don't know how you got in my cabinet. But you ain't stayin'."

Davidowitz looks at me with despair. "Him you choose as President?" he complains.

"So elect me," asserts Mrs. Marcus.

"A woman?" Feltenstein asks with disbelief.

Mild, old Mrs. Levy pounds the table. I can't believe it. "What's the matter with a woman!" she shouts. "I could be President too."

Feltenstein shakes his head. "The President shouldn't smell," he says undiplomatically.

Stoopak stands up and looks around. "A President you got," he says firmly. He smiles cagily. "But other jobs we got to give. Vice-President, Secretary of this and that, generals, admirals, you name it."

The Stoopak administration is corrupt from the beginning. Cabinet posts go for Hershey bars, chewing gum, even dental floss. The Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff gets his position one night by giving Stoopak his chopped liver. Only Mrs. Hirsch is unable at first to bribe her way into the government. She is a thin wisp of a woman who makes clucking noises and says "oh my" and "dear me," as she reads the paper or watches television. She once belonged to an anti-Zionist organization that is aginst the support that American Jews give to Israel. For this, Stoopak doesn't forgive her. She pesters him, however, and finally he gives in.

"So okay," he says. "Pass me your herring, and you can be ambassador to Iran."

"Oh my!" Mrs. Hirsch exclaims. "To Iran? A Jew?"

"So what you think we got here?"

"What about Figliozzo?"

"Figliozzo is cleaning up the City. I can't spare him."

She takes the job. Stoopak insists that means she should eat by herself at a separate table called "Iran." I try to talk him out of it, but he is adamant. She does this for a while, but one night I'm glad to see she rejoins the long table.

"What's this?" Stoopak inquires. "I didn't recall you."

"I got sent," Mrs. Hirsch explains.

"Sent? By who?"

"Khomeni," she says. She begins to eat vigorously, paying no attention to Stoopak's complaints.

The amazing thing about all this is the change in Stoopak. He knows everybody's name and position. He hardly ever stays in his room. He eats better, and doesn't spray so much. Doctor Shapiro says it's a miracle. He's never seen senility cured just like that. Mrs. Marcus has changed too. She hobnobs with everybody now. Of course, she wants to be President. The other night, she offers Feltenstein a massage. Feltenstein has arthritis. They all do, but Feltenstein's is worse. "Make you feel like a boychick again," she promises. He eyes her massive arms warily. "If you don't give it all you got, I'll take," he says.

Friday night is Stoopak's birthday. Eighty-six years old. He blows out the candles—with lots of spray—and then calls a meeting. I have my tape recorder. Doctor Shapiro tells me he wants to hear a tape sometime, so I'm prepared. He wants to write this up. To show how much love can do compared with medicine. It isn't really love; it's just fun, but I don't argue. I tape the meeting.

"What we gonna do?" asks Figliozzo. "Declare war? Or make a tax cut?"

"We gonna celebrate my birthday," Stoopak commands.

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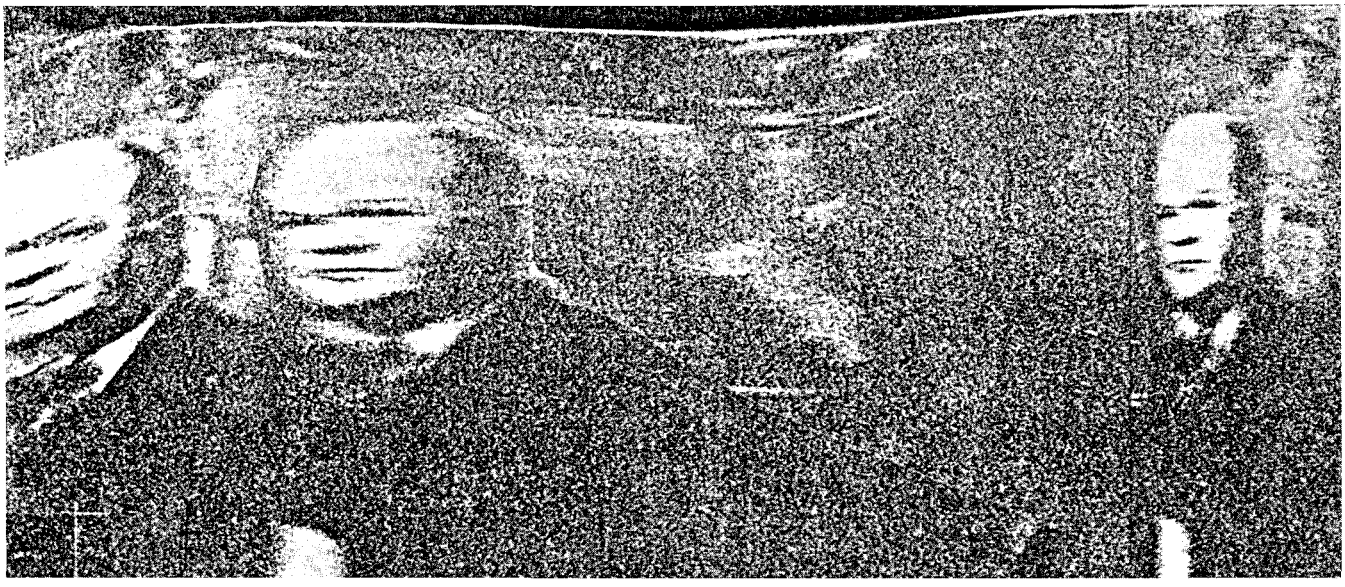

"You just had your cake," Figliozzo retorts. "You want them to play hail to the chef?"

"So ask for a loan, I tell you drop dead, you don't shut up!" Stoopak shouts.

Mrs. Marcus turns to the others for support. "He screws the City, make me President. We take from farmers," she says.

"There's no money for a loan anyway," says Grossman. "We've been profligate enough."

Stoopak is annoyed. "Who knows from profligate!" he yells. "My birthday we gotta celebrate!"

Feltenstein holds his nose. "Mrs. Levy just celebrated it," he says with his usual candor.

Mrs. Levy is embarrassed. "It wasn't much. I'll be back in a minute," she says.

"How about a dance?" asks Mrs. Hirsch.

"No," declares Stoopak. "We gonna make rules."

"Rules?" asks Davidowitz.

"Yes. Rules. So we all enjoy."

"What's to enjoy?" Feltenstein complains. "We're in a home. They don't want us nowhere else. So this is it. Until . . ."

"Until nothin'," Stoopak interrupts. "We gonna enjoy *here, now*. That's rule number one."

"Is that a law? You gotta enjoy?" Figliozzo asks incredulously.

"Yeah. And anybody don't enjoy, don't belong," answers Stoopak.

Mrs. Hirsch is eager to be included. "I enjoy," she says.

"I'm all for this unless it's inflationary," declares Grossman. He never forgets he's Arthur Burns.

"It's easy for you," Mrs. Marcus states competitively. "You're President."

"Don't mean nothin'," Stoopak says. "We *all* enjoy."

"Then stop calling me a cheat," Davidowitz demands.

Stoopak raises his right hand. "I will. I swear. Even though . . ."

"No!" Davidowitz breaks in.

"You're right," Stoopak concedes. "To enjoy we gotta tolerate."

"We have to love," Mrs. Levy murmurs shyly.

Feltenstein disagrees. "That much enjoy I don't want," he says.

"Well," explains Stoopak, "we vote on it. This is a democracy. All those in favor of rule number one, raise your hand." They all raise their hand except Feltenstein and Figliozzo.

"I abstain," Figliozzo says. "I'm feeling pretty good, but I think you gotta be Jewish to enjoy."

"If rule number one is you gotta enjoy," says Feltenstein, "then rule number two oughta be you gotta be healthy."

"Right," chimes in Figliozzo. "And rule number three oughta be you gotta live forever."

Stoopak clears his throat and coughs up some greenish stuff. I don't like the looks of it. "You're closer than you think," he says. "Rule number two is anybody gets sick, he's not alone. We stay together, we'll be all right. Anybody goes to the hospital, he gets a visit every day from one of us, and we all know how he does."

There is a hospital down the block from the Home, and, when anybody gets seriously ill, that's where they go. Often, they don't come back. It's a lonely and frightening prospect. I am pleased about rule number two, and proud that I thought up the idea of the government, and that I was so clever to pick Stoopak to head it. Although I never dreamed he would blossom so.

"That's lovely," purrs Mrs. Levy.

"I'd be glad to visit," Mrs. Hirsch says eagerly.

"And we make sure they know in the hospital they got somebody important," Mrs. Marcus states with authority.

"Absolutely," emphasizes Grossman.

"Sure," jokes Figliozzo. "You don't give Arthur Burns an enema without lots of thought."

"And water," adds Davidowitz.

"Could rock the economy," says Feltenstein.

Stoopak points his bony finger at me. "We gonna need Doctor Shapiro to cooperate. Okay?"

"Yes," I answer. I don't see why not.

Saturday morning I play the tape for Doctor Shapiro. He laughs until there are tears in his eyes. "You'll cooperate?" I ask.

"More than that," he says. "Make me Surgeon General."

Unfortunately, on Sunday morning there is need for the Surgeon General. Stoopak wakes up with a high temperature and much coughing, more of that greenish stuff

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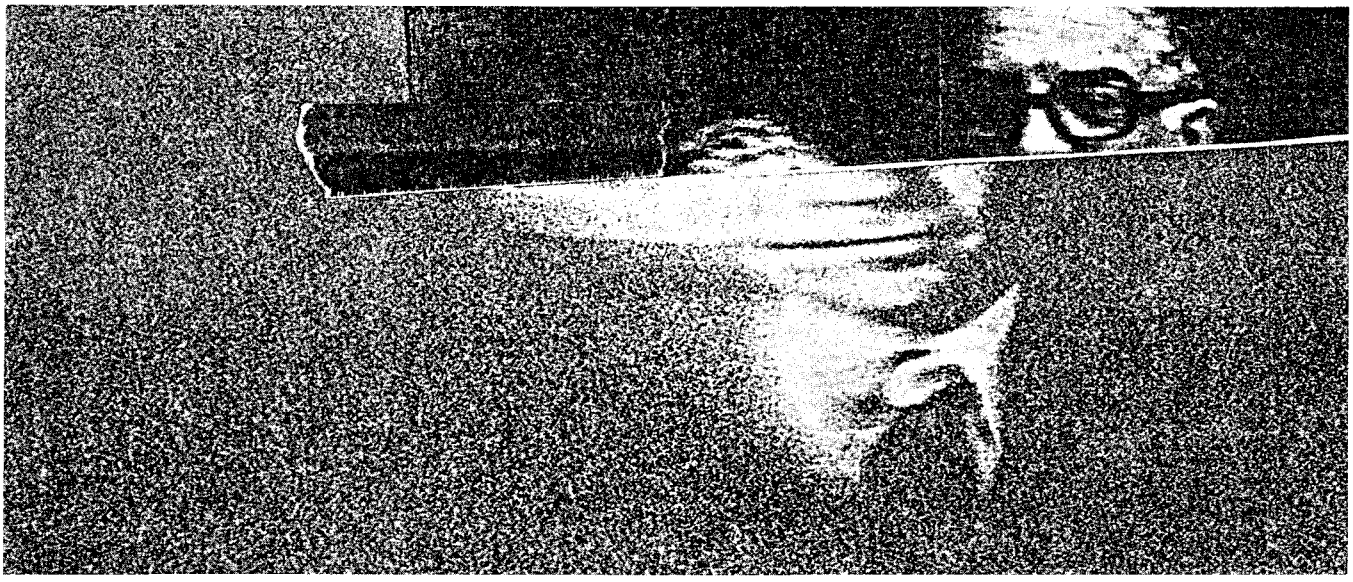

that means infection. Doctor Shapiro thinks it's pneumonia, and has phoned for an ambulance. I have a hard time keeping the others out of his room. They want to reassure him. They respect him now, and they respect each other too, because they see everyone as important—in his own right and as a member of a team. This game has made its own reality. Even Doctor Shapiro treats Stoopak with more deference than I'm accustomed to seeing, although he's always been gentle with these old people. Mrs. Marcus accosts him in the hall.

"Make them know it's the President they're getting," she orders.

"Don't worry," he responds with feeling. "He'll get the best of care."

Stoopak, weak and feverish, still is not in bad spirits. "Thank God for rule number two," he tells me. "Every day a visitor. Listen, I want Davidowitz to be first. I woke up this morning, I remembered Lefkowitz. Not Davidowitz. Lefkowitz. It was Lefkowitz tried to screw me out of that mortgage. Tall fellow—like Davidowitz. But a cheat. I told him in front of his wife and daughter. I . . . ."

"Davidowitz will be glad to know you thought of this," I interrupt. It's bad for him to get excited.

They are all on the alert waiting for the ambulance. It used to be that nobody paid much attention when the ambulance came. Perhaps there was even some satisfaction that it wasn't for them. Now, it is different. They—we—all have a sense of loss. Will Stoopak ever return? I am not optimistic about that. Will it be the same here without him? Who will be next? How can this Administration have a sense of continuity if its members are subject to pneumonia, heart failure, strokes? Administration—baloney! For me, the game is over. My imagination and cheerfulness are defeated by withered flesh, congested lungs, aching joints, and boxes and boxes and boxes of Kleenex. Yet, of course, I must pretend. We gather in the card room. Its windows overlook the street down which the ambulance will come.

"He was such a sweet man," Mrs. Hirsch reminisces already, "even if he didn't like me."

"He got to like you," says Davidowitz. "*Me* he didn't like."

"That's not true," I state. I tell Davidowitz about Lefkowitz.

"I never owned a mortage," Davidowitz says wistfully. "All my life I spend fighting the capitalists, and then he accuses me of stealing a second mortgage."

"So who's gonna be President while Stoopak's away?" Mrs. Marcus asks hopefully.

"Anybody but you," Feltenstein answers with a frown.

"What's wrong with me?"

"You gave me a massage, I'm black and blue."

"Dear me," sighs Mrs. Hirsch.

"I'd run for the office," Figliozzo says, "but I'd never make it without the Jewish vote."

The ambulance is here. Mrs. Levy spots it first. We all watch as two men emerge, open the back, and pull out a stretcher.

Grossman puffs on his tobaccoless pipe. "I wouldn't be President," he says. "I'd rather be Arthur Burns."

It's true. I know what he means. Presidents come and go. They get shot. They get pneumonia. Arthur Burns goes on forever.

I go to Stoopak's room to help out. Doctor Shapiro is taking his pulse. Stoopak smiles at me. "Keep the game going, Bob," he says. I check to make sure everything is packed. We may have to use this room for someone else. There is a waiting list to get into this home. Stoopak's small frame is on the stretcher now, the sheet and blanket snugly pulled to his chin. He looks like a child. In the hall, he sees them all waiting for him.

"Every day a visitor," he says.

"And I'm first. I'll see you this afternoon," Davidowitz reassures him.

Stoopak waves his hand weakly as they carry him away. We watch the stretcher recede down the corridor like a train carrying a loved one.

Mrs. Levy is the first to break the silence. "*I* should be President now," she asserts.

"You?" questions Mrs. Marcus like she's talking to a fly.

"Yes. Me. You're too pushy. Feltenstein is a grump. Hirsch wouldn't sit well with Stoopak if he ever found out about her. Grossman doesn't want it. Figliozzo isn't Jewish. It's either me or Davidowitz."

"You can be President," concedes Davidowitz. "I had enough politics in the union."

"Okay," says Figliozzo. "Tonight a meeting." □

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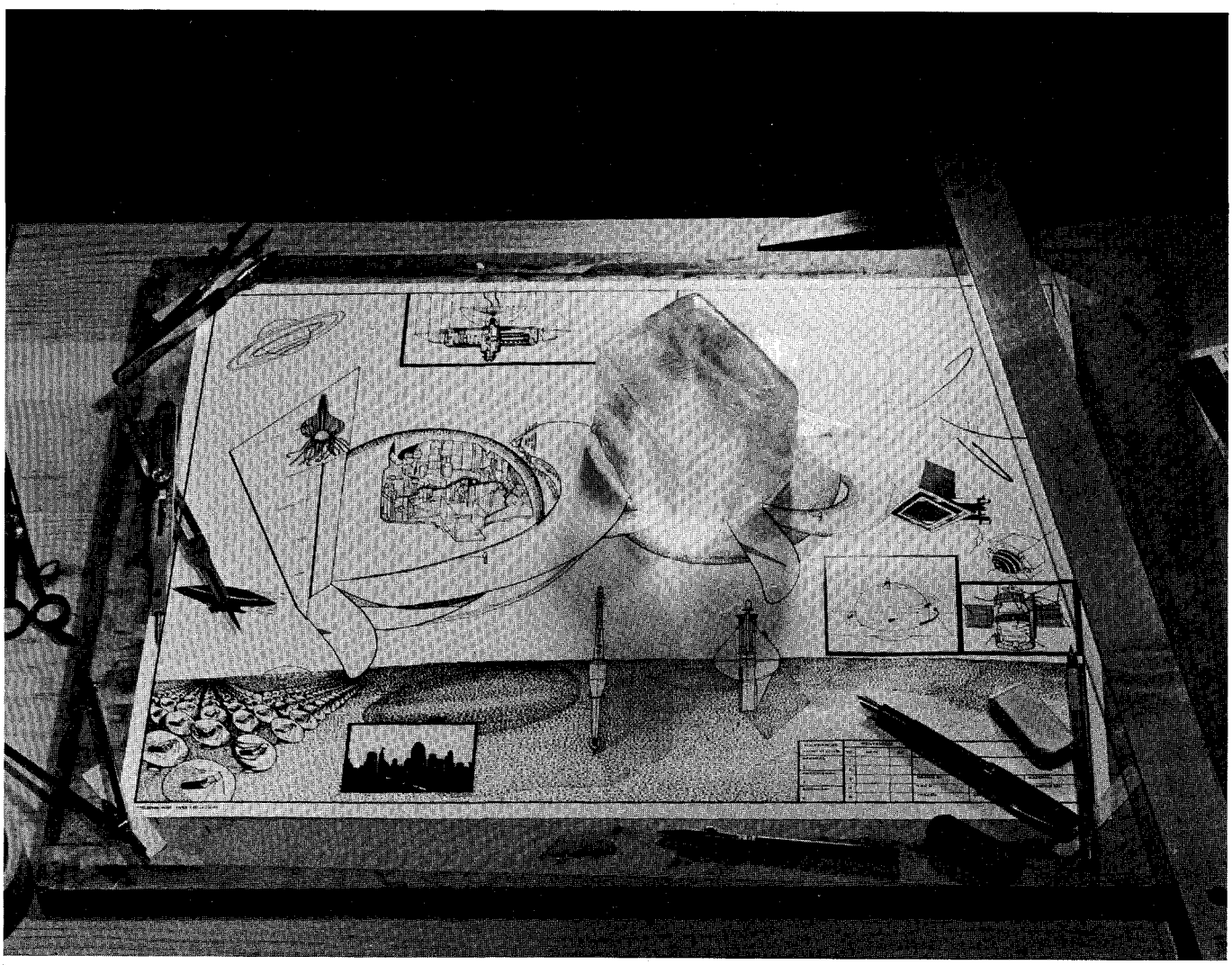
THE WORD ON EARL MULHOLLAN

JOHN MORT



Pamela Scesniak

Driving south from Minneapolis, in the ponderous old Buick that got ten to the gallon, Earl Mulhollan felt in control. He herded the car around patches of ice, growled when passing trucks threw slush across the windshield. Once he stopped to push a sweater up the cold air vent. He had breakfast somewhere; he'd been driving all night.

It was 54 in Kansas City. He ventured into town, found a used book store, and bought a cardboard boxful of science fiction. He sat in the Buick, reading, but in awhile he grew chilly, and decided to drive further south. An on ramp confused him, and soon Earl realized that he was

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JOHN MORT is from Kansas and has contributed earlier–quite different–work to this magazine.

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headed west into Kansas, rather than south into the Ozarks. He decided that was all right. When he arrived in Wichita it was mid-afternoon, 57 degrees; he checked in at the Ramada Inn.

In the days that followed he drove on to Oklahoma City, Dallas, and dozens of smaller towns, never touching any of them, sticking near the Interstate almost fearfully. It was warmer now, and traveling many miles in a day did not interest him. Earl ate hamburgers and drank coffee at McDonald's, Burger King, A & W, Hardee's, Mr. Quick. Suddenly he liked such places. He was more alone in them than he'd been on trips to the North Woods. No one spoke. Everyone was passing through. The music, from place to place a continuous medley of old hits like "Moon River" or "A Taste of Honey," caught him for an instant, but then was merely insulation, like Valium. He might have been at the snack bar of a moon colony.

He'd order a sack of fries and a cup of coffee. Dutifully, he'd down the fries, juggle the little vials of artificial cream, sip his coffee. And he'd read his science fiction, floating off across space to rescue Dejah Thoris, princess of dying Barsoom; a king, he'd rule his people wisely, under a red sun. He'd never age.

After awhile he'd look up, see the Buick in the parking lot, and think, I should go on now.

Trudy was from Pocahontas, Iowa, which was one of the reasons Earl had married her. Himself from Bemidji, Minnesota, he liked small towns and had clung, or tried to cling, to the values of his parents. Perhaps he saw things that weren't there, for Trudy had been around. She'd been a stewardess back when their main characteristic was legs, and then for a time she'd lived in New York, trying to become a model. "Bad scene," she'd always say, "bad scene." Anyway her parents disapproved of so much of the good life, and sent her to school in Minneapolis, to become a nurse.

They met in a hospital administration class. She told him of her adventures, and he listened respectfully, having had few adventures of his own. It was satisfying, but unreal, to be seen with such a pretty girl. It was as though he'd won a contest: "A Day with Tina Louise." He guessed that what she liked in him was his seriousness, his distrust of anything new; he might have seemed more mature than he was. "Earl's very intelligent," Trudy told her friends, at parties.

In those days he was enthused about NASA and the moon effort. He read quantities of science fiction, dipped into physics texts, had a subscription to *Scientific American*. He dreamed of mammoth, spherical space stations orbiting the earth, all but divinely self-sufficient. Highly-trained, *objective* men and women worked there to enhance the best instincts of man, in a kind of assembly-line of thought. Often he stayed up late to draw his space stations, using a protractor and compass, a T-square, architect's pencils. There was a window where you could look out into the galaxy. Arrows indicated where people worked, slept, recreated. Tanks collected waste; an exotic distillery rendered it back into potable water, or fertilizer for hydroponic gardening. When it grew very late, Earl couldn't quite stop. Then he'd freehand small eruptions from the outside of his sphere, like the louvers on a Buck Rogers ray gun, and he'd label these "Solar Collectors," or sometimes, knowledge spent, "Vortex Vents."

When they graduated, both Earl and Trudy quickly found jobs in Hennepin County. As their friends moved away they saw each other more often, and soon enough were married, in Pocahontas. Earl impressed Trudy's father by announcing he planned to vote for Nixon. It surprised Earl when this angered Trudy. She did not understand how anyone living in Minnesota could oppose Humphrey. "Humphrey's a *good* man," she said. "Yes, I think he is," Earl agreed, but stopped, not having any very good reason to vote for either candidate. Vaguely he thought Nixon might end the war more quickly; he'd failed his physical not long before, and felt guilty about high school friends who'd been killed over there.

They rented an old house in St. Paul, and had enough money, though the rent was high and they had to begin repaying school debts. Trudy was always meeting couples and inviting them over; Earl couldn't seem to learn how to mix drinks, and couldn't muster much to say to these other husbands. The best thing about those early months was the moon landing—he went over to the university, where he knew there was a color tv. It was better than the World Series. When Trudy said she'd heard the whole thing was a lie, merely a public relations stunt to enliven sagging foreign relations, he could have killed her.

Occasionally, when things grew dull, Trudy would buy a lid of grass. She always paid too much for it, and always managed to select the stuff cut with marjoram—or so friends said. But Earl welcomed the experiment; it made him feel as though he were keeping up. Trudy would shut all the windows, turn on the vents, drag him into the bathroom and say, "*You* roll it." They'd smoke, drink Ripple, watch the reruns of *Star Trek*.

Trudy's job was with Public Health, going around Hennepin County telling poor folks to brush their teeth and practice good nutrition and see the doctor. At first this made her happy. She was a nurse! She felt that a new day was about to dawn, when the poor would no longer be with us, and the children of the ignorant would grow wise. But soon she had tired of old women stealing her hours, talking of their late husbands, telling tales of the pioneers. She discovered no charm in rheumy-eyed welfare mothers, or their bratty children, clinging to her uniforms. She began to feel that she was ineffective, that her talents were wasted. She was bored.

Earl was sympathetic, but did not quite understand. His own job, as the personnel director of a small private hospital, was routine; any fool could have handled it. His expensive degree was merely a union card. But it had never occurred to him to expect otherwise. Jobs were *supposed* to be boring.

Trudy bought yards and yards of white polyester, and sewed a dozen pantsuits. The pantsuits were a turning point for Earl: he mourned the disappearance of legs. Looking at Trudy now, he felt he must have married by accident. For the first time, he realized that these were the 1970s. He didn't know where the time had gone.

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Trudy cut her hair short. She met with other women, shopping for causes to fit a nurse's expertise: rape victims, abused children—or even those bits and pieces of men, caged by the VA. At night, if she were gone, Earl paced the old house; if her meeting were at home, so many women would make him nervous, and he'd go out to McDonald's for coffee. She campaigned for Humphrey when he ran again, and needed a car of her own, so he went with her and they bought a Toyota with a floorshift. She drove it as though it were an irresistible force. Seeing her behind the wheel, he thought of women in television commercials: beautiful, correct; such perfection left him cold. He stayed with the old Buick, tuning it against the coming winter.

Finally Trudy announced she was quitting Public Health; she wanted to return for her Master's. "Fine," he said. "Fine." And he supposed it was, but he hadn't many standards for comparison. He wished that he had known or knew more women, but that seemed impossible. The sympathetic stares, the interested, sometimes even amorous glances that he had received at the hospital had caught him unprepared—so, not responding, he was thought of as a cold fish. Now he thought, I *am* a cold fish.

In the old days, school hadn't meant much to either of them. But now Trudy returned from classes entranced by her potential. She referred to ideas in hospital administration that he'd never heard of, didn't want to hear of. What had happened to Pocahontas? Where was his stewardess? Where had she hidden her legs?

His father was a plumber, his mother a waitress. All they'd ever managed was to do a little better than survive. Earl had grown up in Bemidji where it always seemed to be winter, and he appreciated survival. Now, if his wife were any clue, the correct thing was to be unique, vital to your time. Survival was given.

"Remember my space stations?" he asked her one day.

"Sure."

"They were very advanced. But they weren't practical; they could never come to anything. You know? I've been thinking—"

"Your job must be very boring."

He hated her for saying that. He wanted to proceed as though coming upon a revelation. He resented her knowing him so well, cheating him of his logic. He said, skipping steps himself, "You don't ever talk to me."

"I'm sorry," she said, but he could see that she wasn't, that she thought that he was merely being irritable.

Very quietly, then, he took courses in mechanical drawing, in physics, metallurgy. He learned to read technical manuals. He bought an acetylene welder, a second-hand lathe; he haunted garage sales and auctions picking up micrometers and dies and well-made *old* things, from which he might cannibalize the steel and cast iron and brass. He made molds and poured in hot wax, sculpting prototypes of more aerodynamic lawn mower blades, more efficient wood stoves—and finally, an engine to alleviate the energy shortage.

He slept on it, he read for it, he drew it—and he raved about it to Trudy, breaking in one night as she was talking about what schemers some of her classmates were. She looked at him, stunned, then in consternation, then sleepily. Next day, when he referred to some concept he'd elaborated upon that evening, she didn't know what he was talking about. It shut him up, hurt him, so that he didn't listen as she talked of some experiment that was going on, to conquer glaucoma.

And then, every time he had to speak to her, he took delight in technicalities, putting on a mad professor show. The bewilderment in her eyes grew more grave as he spoke, made her tired, drained the little triumphs from her day. Shut up about your autistic children, he thought, droning on, shut up about teaching poetry to amputees at VA. Shut up! He could put her off now. He could put her to sleep.

Yet he was serious about the engine. It would be air-cooled, two-cycle, four cylinders with a long stroke: something like a hybrid of tractor and chainsaw engines. It would run on ethanol. He felt it was a sensible, middle-of-the-road approach.

He took parts from junk cars, ordered parts from Chicago. He had parts machined and machined them himself—tempering them on a homemade forge that he stoked with charcoal. His first oil pump, out of a Fiat, was too small. He redesigned his pistons a dozen times.

He hooked it up on a butane line, and it wouldn't start. He didn't panic. He sent to France for different carburetor jets, and when at last they arrived, found they'd been stocked all along in St. Paul. Still, he was calm now. He installed the jets, flipped his ignition.

His engine ran. It ran smoothly, it had good compression, and it was quiet. It was balanced well enough that he could have stood a pencil upon the valve cover. He sat and watched it awhile, waiting for something to go wrong; nothing did. He had several drinks. *Now* what did he do?

He said nothing to Trudy. Instead he broke his news to a tinkering-minded doctor, who in the past had sometimes condescended to talk to Earl in the cafeteria. The doctor nodded sagely. He came to Earl's workshop, bringing some Pickett's beer he'd bought down in Iowa. "My God," he said. "My God, you've really got something."

Earl felt like he had when he was a little boy, and had made a rabbit trap, and had caught a rabbit.

"One thing," said the doctor. "You'll have to file a patent."

Earl didn't want to seem ignorant at this stage. "Well, yeah, I—"

"Sad thing, but you can't trust people. They'll stab you in the back. Friend of mine in Georgia's a lawyer; he's done some patents. I could call him up."

Earl nodded quickly. "That's nice of you."

"*Listen*. Anything I can do to help. This is simple, very efficient, any damn fool could work on it—I tell you, it's gonna fly, friend."

It took time to search a patent. Earl began his wait, with growing confidence, with growing impatience. Meanwhile his doctor friend took a personal interest, inviting him over for a drink, for a swim. You could lie in the doctor's water, look through the glass, and see snow fall. More important, perhaps, the doctor seemed suddenly

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honored to know Earl, and bragged him up to everyone he knew on the hospital staff. Almost overnight, and all the more dramatically because he had seemed so nondescript, Earl became a minor celebrity at the hospital. Men dropped by to talk affectionately of cars they'd owned, or of America's energy future. Women no longer looked past Earl as though he were nothing more than an instrument cart; instead of a cold fish, now he was mysterious, deeply sensitive. There was an article in the paper about him. When he'd talked to the reporter, Earl had found in his voice a miraculous new assurance, a mild arrogance, as though he were some young professor with a successful book.

He had barely a word for Trudy. She was pleased about the doctor friend, asked if she should provide refreshments when he visited; Earl merely grunted. The article in the paper delighted her, explaining the significance of Earl's project when he himself had been unable to—but when she brought it up, he shrugged and stalked off for his workshop. She'd had her chance. She'd been too interested in her do-gooding to take time for him.

There was a new doctor named Anita, with crisp blonde hair flipped back at the edges around her face. Earl shoveled her out of a snowdrift, and they had a drink. She said that she'd heard about his "work," and that she thought it was splendid. She went on to confess that she felt ostracized on the all-male staff. She did not care about money, she said, she did not care about prestige. All she wanted was to help people. It grieved her that men felt threatened by her. Earl told her that he didn't feel threatened. She went on to tell him of her adventures in the world of men; he happened to mention that he no longer slept with his wife. They made love then, with an elaborate casualness. He didn't find her very satisfactory, but knew that he wasn't much of a judge. She told him she'd had better, frankly—but that she'd also had worse. He hurried home and wrote a furious letter to his patent lawyer, outraged at the delay.

It was a hard winter. He could never seem to get warm. To keep the Buick alive, he'd crawl beneath it, on the packed snow, to play a torch on the oil pan. Driving to work, walls of snow rose on either side of him; it was as though the white of the hospital, the icy cleanliness, had oozed out and covered the world. He taped a travel poster of the Bahamas up in his office. One day soon there would be royalty checks, and he'd never be cold again.

Trudy took her degree. She sent out scores of letters, each with a conscientious listing of experience, education, career goals, number of children (none), and personal interests ("working with people, sewing"). And now she tried desperately to show an interest in Earl's undertaking, but he was snappish with her. She was driving him crazy. She'd say, "Saturday let's go over to Wisconsin," or "Let's drive down to Pocahontas." Pocahontas!

When he returned from work she'd have fixed some continental atrocity, and have her collection of candles lit. He tried to be civil, but there was a lot on his mind. She wore sexy nightgowns, she poured him wine, she took off his shoes. She was always asking if she could rub his back. He'd say, "I got some cleaning up to do in the workshop." He'd made her understand that if she joined him there he'd embarrass her, badger her ignorance. And downstairs, upstairs, he could hear her crying. But he was teaching her a lesson. She would learn to respect who he was. Maybe then they could go on again.

A man in California called, and Trudy flew out for an interview. She returned in high spirits. It was a small college, with a lovely campus. They'd received a Federal grant to establish a nursing program. She'd run the show. Her salary would be excellent—Earl wouldn't even have to work; he'd be free to "invent things." "We'll get you away from this cold weather," she said. "We'll go out there and start over."

He tried to act pleased. But to him California was a vague place, the setting for science fiction, a place filled up with social workers and people arguing over lettuce. He could not go away and leave his engine—and all the people who admired him. "No."

"All right, Earl," Trudy said, evenly. And she went without him.

Weeks passed. He took up with Anita again. She read him chapters from a book she was writing. It was about the United States in the 21st Century, when physicians and lawyers and computer people and politicians and college professors would run things for the benefit of the masses. The masses would be very stupid, and spend most of their time watching tv, and Anita was afraid that many of them would have to be sterilized. Earl nodded solemnly, but he wasn't really listening. He wondered how Anita would react if he told her about his space stations.

One day, when it wasn't on his mind, Earl came home and the letter was there. It seemed that an old man in Florida had invented an engine that was almost exactly the same as Earl's. He had secured a patent about the time that Earl was making his first prototypes. The old man had sold his patent to a Japanese motorcycle manufacturer, after being unable to interest any American firms. Drawings were enclosed. A bill was enclosed. The lawyer expressed his regrets.

Earl sat down by the phone. He knew what they'd say. He knew how they'd laugh. "What's the word on Mulhollan?" "He's a fraud. I guess he stole the idea from some old fart down South." Soon, Earl knew, he'd be what he'd always been: someone to ignore.

He called Anita. "I'm low. I'm really low."

"I'm sorry. What can I do?"

"Some Valium, I think. Something."

"Your wife?"

"Sort of. No. My . . . project."

"Something happen?"

"It's ruined."

"Oh. I'm sorry. I—" And then her voice smoothed out into a professional tone, something far away, a voice that Earl believed he'd heard all his life.

Houston would be far enough. He found another bookstore, traded his science fiction two for one, and then for a few days drove around, buying little things, thinking about stray words, one drink too many, moments when

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he'd swelled up and pushed and shoved the few that were below him. He remembered, with a grim affection, a fat old woman from housekeeping who'd hung around his office once his fortunes had waned. She wanted to talk about her husband, who'd been clever with tools and had made wren houses and sold them, before he died.

Earl sold the Buick. And one Saturday morning he checked out of his room at the Best Western, and walked to the airport. He bought his ticket, went down to where the vending machines were and punched for a cup of coffee, then shut himself inside a phone booth.

"Earl! You're on vacation?"

"That's right. How are you, Trudy?"

"Well, I'm fine. I—"

"Like your job? Like California?"

"It's *won*derful out here. I don't know how we stood all those cold winters. My job is *good*—I'm really working hard to get things set up, but there's some real commitment at the administrative level, and I have some pretty sharp young ladies. Earl—"

"Go on. Say it, Trudy."

"—I've been trying to call you. I've decided . . . oh, I've met someone, Earl, and—"

"Sure. One thing: if you need me to sign something, send it General D, St. Paul—"

"You're moving?"

He paused. " . . . Into something smaller. What's he like?"

"He's—are you all right?"

"Not bad, Trudy."

"Oh. Well, he's—he's a consultant. He handles these . . . 99-year leases? For the old people, I mean in condominiums. He's *very* kind. Of course he's a Californian through and through, and—"

"I hope it works out for you."

"Well, I hope . . . hope that you—"

"Sure. Take care?"

"You, too. Just General D?"

"I'll get it. Goodbye, Trudy."

He was hanging up when her reply finally came: "Goodbye, Earl."

She had not asked about his engine. Well, at that, what would he have told her?

He'd never been on a jet, and so was surprised, and pleased, when the takeoff tossed him back into his seat. A vision of the Apollo flights flicked in his mind; one day, Earl thought, I'll fly to the moon. He looked down upon Houston's sprawl, and felt homesick.

He had a science fiction novel out when a stewardess came and offered him a drink. He smiled at her, but she missed it, moving on to help an old woman with her pillow. Earl looked out over the clouds, tried to see the Gulf.

He wondered if they might not need a welder. Wouldn't there be tools to braze? Mower sections that snapped off, broken jeep axles? Maybe he could locate one of those little shops where you slept upstairs, or in a back room. He wouldn't need so much: a hotplate, a cot.

Maybe not. He knew very little Spanish, and really he had no skills, no trade. At least, he thought, I'll be warm down there. At least I'll be warm. □

JACK MYERS

LIGHTWEIGHT

The few times I've been knocked out cold
I wasn't interested in coming back. Not that
being a cold black speck in a miasma of stars
is so spectacular, I just couldn't take the fullness
of the heart.

For the heart is a stubborn problem
whose silence is described by noise.
It is the roar of an empty stadium
with the face of a boxing glove,
the two-fisted stroke of a child
who pounds I will and I will not.

So I throw a cold shot down like a fist
smashed in my face. The booze hits my brain
like a bell. Everyone rises and drinks to the heart.
I call the bar my heart and drink to that woman
in the corner. Here's to the heart, to this soak
of darkness starred by lust. Here's to all the hopeless
lovers in the world, walking around knocked out.

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Window Built for My Daughter at Summer Solstice

1.
The window in the wall sits
square in wood cut square

by a circle toothed and turning.
Here the circle of the sun

shines through and the yellow
tooth and melon of the moon

shine through to your eyes.
And your eyes are the windows

of your skull, from which
your brain—nude hermit,

blind nun—gazes out,
grateful for the view

and unaware of gratitude,
its graceful habit.

2.
Light pours into the window
bright or dim, shaping

all the space within
as fluids shape

to their containers: Water
in the vase, air

in the expanding lung,
gladness in the heart.

3.
Once the sun sets
and the moon,

all the nameless stars
whirl by. We look

out at them, name them
names we understand,

and they are constellations,
shapes given

by our need to know
what we cannot be known by.

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4.
I turn to look at you, daughter,
by the radiance of dead stars

still lighting our earth
and I see your face anew,

gazing up and out
as I do now

into this darkness
generous with stars,

these points of light
by which men lost

in wilderness expanding
vast as time

permit themselves to dream
of their location.

5.
Every map at its edges
dissolves. We are

nowhere that would recognize
its name. The sky

turns round us
as we turn. I speak

the name we've given you
against the mystery

and as you turn to me
the blaze of

what we know
could blind the sun.

William Pitt Root

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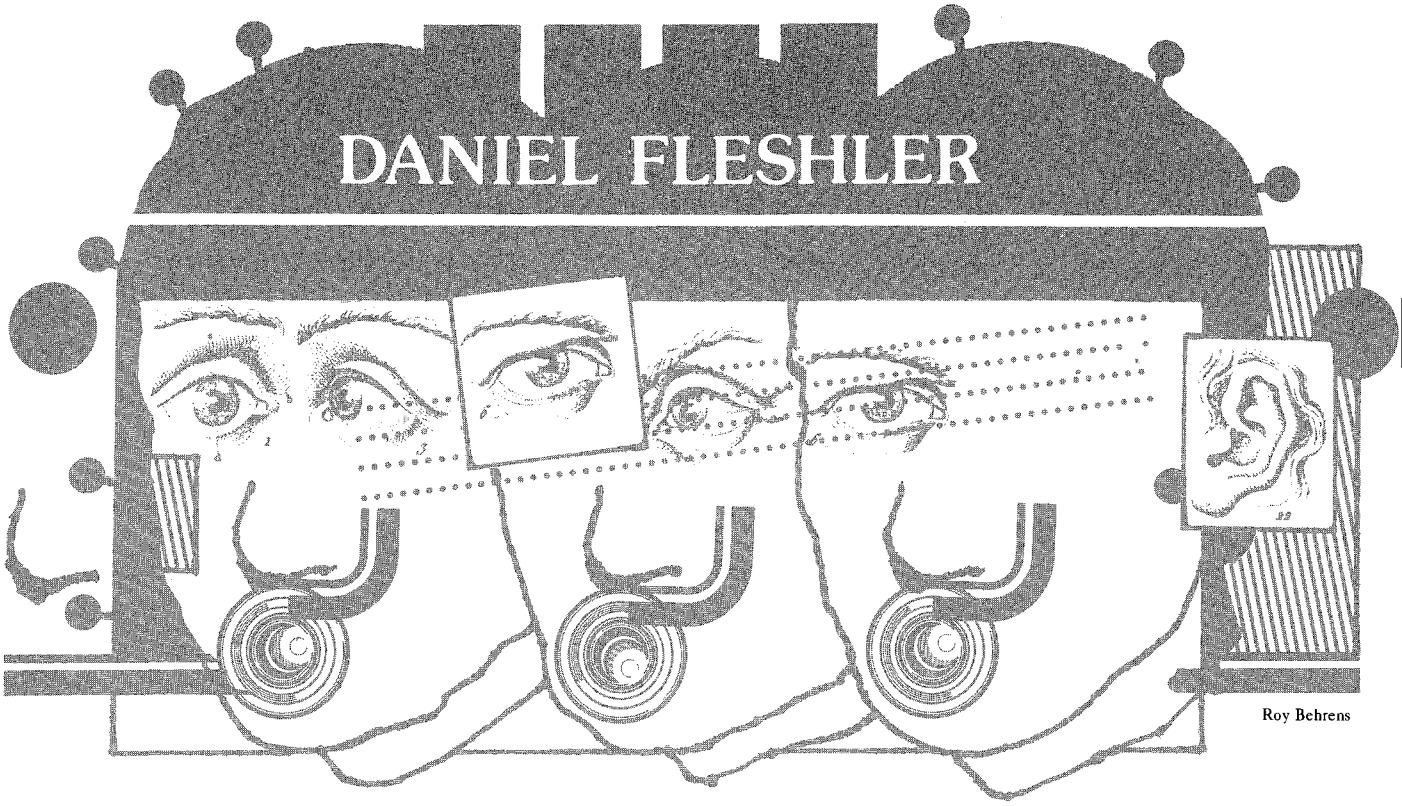
HERE

DANIEL FLESHLER



Roy Behrens

So today my grand-nephew pays a visit to the Rancho Deluxe Condominiums, and he looks like the carp that Sadie used to roll in white flour. Right away I can see it: a pale fish from the sea. But I don't make a judgment. Two days ago I was talking to Marcus Welby in the middle of the living room. I was alone and making a long conversation with the television. I should make a judgment?

College boy, in the graduate school. Studies the biology. On their holiday. He walks in and I say to him:

"Well then, Louie! Hello!"

He says hello uncle Mort he's on vacation.

Or a little croak like he didn't finish gargling. Or like the beggars with no shoes on Henry Street, and one look at those faces and one listen to them, you gave a nickel, maybe some hope would appear. That was right after the first war, and you think I was swimming in nickels myself, those days?

So I ask him:

"How long have you been in Miami?"

He says a few days.

I say: "Come in, have a seat, tell me news, you'll excuse the apartment, you'll excuse me I can't move too good."

He sits down and right away makes apologies. He's sorry I'm not feeling well. He's sorry he didn't come sooner, but he'll fly back to that school in a little while. Then he gives a little laugh. Then he gives a little shrug. Then he says even though he don't see a reason for it.

I ask: "Reason for what?"

He says to fly back to that school, to not fly back.

I say: "Well then!"

Now I don't want to make a judgment still, because I trust myself as far as you could throw nine pianos these days. But this is Harry's boy, that used to read out loud so beautiful every Pesach holiday. When my favorite grand-nephew has a face like he can't make water, this is an issue, a real situation.

So he sits on the chair that looks out on the beach, and he stares out there a little while. He keeps looking out there. Then he gives a smirk at all the people swimming or doing sun. Then he gives a mutter which asks how I am.

I say: "I'm not dancing myself, Louie."

He gives a smile and a shake of the head, and he stares out there some more. He always liked me, and when the family came to visit in Stroudsburg, Pennsylvania—don't ask why we moved there from the city. I don't know, still—this boy would sit always on my lap and make me talk about the old time. Then he says that maybe in the whole family I'm the one that might have an understanding of him, this is what he always felt. Then he don't say a thing. Not a word more from Louie after that.

Who am I to take an action, I want to know? My cousin Berly fell asleep in nineteen twenty and didn't wake up till nineteen twenty-five, and you think I could do a thing for him? But I ask myself, what could it be, maybe it's a simple thing, and I ask Louie:

"Problems with the girls?"

He gives a smile again and he says he wishes it were that simple.

DANIEL FLESHLER has been associated with such diverse journals as the Harvard Advocate, Paperboard Packaging, *and* The National Enquirer.

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Then I ask money and he says all he needs. I ask studying, and his big lab with equipment all the best, and he says fine, fine, everything would be fine if he would only allow it.

This was a certain way to put a thing!

Then he whispers it don't make a difference, he don't care, it wouldn't matter. Right out of the blue he says these things, like we were in a conversation that I didn't know about. This was a smart boy, I didn't know what to think. This was a boy who had always his brains to go with his eyes, that looked at you and you could squeeze them they were so blue. Then he says he can't find a reason.

"Reason for what?" I ask.

He don't answer that particular question. He says he'll tell the truth, he would sleep all day if he could. He says he knows what I'm thinking, but he's not lazy. Lazy is not the issue. He would sleep all day, it wouldn't matter. The issue is it wouldn't matter. He stares some more out that window, it was a little dirty, but I wasn't ashamed. Who is there to clean my window now, except that lady which comes once a week and don't even say pish-posh, just takes twenty dollars like she's doing me a favor?

So I'm sitting there and I can't move too good and I have to think fast for this boy. This boy don't want from me a spiel which tells how hard we worked, he should be grateful. Or it was so cold in steerage coming over here I lost the feelings in three toes. Or, in the Ukraine, my uncle Chaim the cantor was once arrested because his voice was too sweet for a Jew. Louie has all this information already. This he knows about.

So there I am, and I can't reach out even to rub his neck, which is white like powder. I can think, only. After many minutes I pick a time in my life. Nineteen thirty-three. That was quite a time in my life. The coal companies they closed all over the Poconos. Nobody was mining. The banks no one was sure about. Nobody was making a purchase. People with apples in place of brains walking around with nothing to do. And I tell Louie about that year.

That was a depression. I ask Louie if he knows that and he says yes. I was in real estate like I was for forty years. I tell Louie people were poor all over the Poconos, hungry even, some of them. And all of them coming asking for shelter cheap. Cabins they wanted cheap. I sat in my office in that time in my life and what could I tell these people? Sadie had my Stevie two years before and that made five I had to feed. And five to keep warm, it wasn't a warm winter. So they came with dirty faces, coal mining faces, and thin from no meat, some of them. They were sad like dogs. All they wanted was shelter cheap so they could maybe find work or hunt for food. And you think anyone paid the bills to me, that year? What the hell was I supposed to do, I ask Louie, pish my cabins away?

Then he gives me a look. He could have cut me open with that look, and he asks what this has to do with him? My hands they shake a little and I say: "Make up your mind when I'm through with it." But my hands they shake a little, because I don't know what this has to do with a thing. That I don't know myself, really, God give me a knock in the head.

Again I talked about nineteen thirty-three. I sat there every day and I said: "I'm most very sorry, I can't sell this house for less than five thousand, ten percent down. I can't rent this cabin for less than fifty, with concessions." It would have drowned me to do this, I tell Louie. All those faces, those eyes, those teeth, asking help. It was impossible. What was I supposed to do? I ask Louie. Was I supposed to give my cabins away as Christmas gifts, which I had paid good money for?

So then I tell Louie some more truth about that year. It is not easy to say this next thing to him, but I figure it don't matter what happened so long ago. I tell him that in nineteen thirty-three, my Sadie and I did not live like a husband and wife. She was not happy with me, and with my worrying, and with the windows I broke sometimes after a hard day, and with the children who could not look at me crossways without getting knocks on their heads. I give no more details on this particular issue.

Louie is shocked that I should make these statements. He asks was it *his* aunt Sadie I'm talking about? So I say: "Unless another woman took her place when I didn't notice, it was Sadie, may she rest in peace, which she never gave me in that year."

All of that year I went to shul to pray God get me out, pull me away, do me a favor. But He didn't want to hear it. He wasn't interested. Maybe there was worse off than me, that He should be concerned with. But I didn't know what He was thinking, because I was not a man with an understanding of His ways.

Sometimes—I'm not ashamed to admit it—the people wouldn't leave from my office, and I had to throw them out with my two hands. Those faces. Those teeth. Out they went, calling names that boil the blood: "Yid! Kike! Cheap Jew!" And at that time, I told Louie, I thought maybe they had a point. I didn't know what to think.

So by that fall, there was in my mind a great darkness. I have not felt such a darkness since, so I can't explain it to Louie like I should. Or like a cave full of dirty water, or like a mouth full of teeth that aren't capped right, that is how I felt. They say, in the English, that there is a silver lining in each cloud. I was searching, all my life, for this silver. This was my attitude, and Louie knows this, and he looks at me like I'm not his uncle Mort, that I should not have one hope in the head. But my wife of ten years was suddenly a piece dry cake. The business I built out of shmutz and air, it made my heart ache to go there every day. Then Louie shakes his head and says I'm repeating myself. He's sorry to be impolite, but these things I've already told him, get to the point. My hands they shake and I say: "Give an old man a chance, if it wouldn't be a strain!"

Then I ask him if he knows what's Yom Kippur and he says of course he knows what's Yom Kippur. So I ask him to tell me what's Yom Kippur and he says you don't wash, you don't eat on this day. You pray that God should seal your fate in the Book of Life, the Sefer Chai. You're sorry for everything you do that year. You don't act like a man, you act like an angel, Louie tells me. (He knows it by heart, even though he don't go to shul anymore, now that he is a man of science, soon a Professor.)

And I tell him about the Yom Kippur of nineteen thirty-three in Stroudsburg, Pennsylvania. I tell him

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about the Erev Yomtov—the night before—when Sadie gave us fish, and chopped meat, and green beans, and lemonade. She scraped it up from I don't know where, like she was sorry for something. And that night I ate everything on the table, because a feast I needed. And I looked in her eyes the whole meal, she should come back to me, but she bowed down the head and wouldn't look back.

I tell him about walking under the full moon to shul, when I said: "I'm sorry Morris Millman for taking the Brook Cabins away from you, I'm sorry Littstein for beating you at cards when I knew you needed the money, I'm sorry Lepchik that my David gave your Mel a bloody head, I'm sorry Sam Blum for yelling when you didn't have the *Herald Tribune* in the store for three days. I'm sorry everybody!"

Then I ask Louie what's the Kol Nidre. Right away he says it's the evening prayer. It's the prayer so God shouldn't curse you if you broke a promise that you couldn't remember. (Louie knows it by heart. I almost kiss him then.) So I tell him about the night the cantor sang Kol Nidre, and I couldn't even hear it. The other evening prayers I couldn't even listen to them. This praying for a good fate didn't mean nothing to me. So it's one year better, one year worse. You don't know why. You don't know what's on His mind. You don't even know if He has a mind. On that Yom Kippur night, I couldn't have a belief.

By the time I went home, I was like a piece garbage, not a man. I fell asleep and woke up and I didn't want to go to shul that morning. I didn't want to fast. I wanted a nice breakfast and I almost—God forbid—went to the Frigidaire and took a cup milk. Louie looks like a sad dog. He says he probably would have drank the milk and I say: "Quiet, I'm talking."

So I went to shul because it wouldn't look good to stay home. And all day I was dovening—praying, they call it. All day things happened to the body, which wanted a good lunch. Feelings were over and over me like the waves in Rockaway Beach. Sometimes I was dovening like it meant something, sometimes you had to be kidding. When they read from Jonah, who was swallowed up, I was wide awake, I knew what they were talking. When they sang the earth belongs to the Lord, like He was a landlord, I wanted to go home and take a shower. Mostly I was a machine that was praying, an automat. That and very hungry, and by the end of the day, tired like I was digging ditches.

At this point Louie pushes his face against the window and taps his foot. I want to tell him he should pull his face back, or he'll get a dirty nose. But I don't tell him. I'm afraid I'll find out he's not listening.

Almost at the end, we sing the Kaddish for the dead, but we sing in a happy way at this point in the service, because they say He has mercy at this time. What He has all the other time, they can't tell you. But I listened when we sang the Kaddish and I knew that something wasn't right about this song. It wasn't loud like anyone cared about it. So I looked around and I saw that Harry Littstein wasn't singing one note. Sam Blum wouldn't care if a house dropped on his head. Lepchik had his eyes closed when he sang, and Klein yawned, and Millman moved his mouth only a little, and Dubnow was snoring. I looked at the women on the west wall and half of them stared at the floor and the other half sang very soft and the children were crying. A thing like this I had never seen in the congregation Mishkan Judea!

I looked at Nathan Ribiloff while I sang and Nathan Ribiloff looked at me. I ask Louie if he knows who this man was, and Louie whispers no. So I tell him Ribiloff was my competition in the business. If there was a devil without any horns it would be this man. A man I wouldn't want ten miles near my house. A man who rented shelter cheap to miners, then raised the rent when they didn't have one place to go. A gambler. A rough individual, of the lower sort.

This man Nathan Ribiloff looked at me and he was very angry. Then he walked right up to the altar. When we finished Kaddish, he told the Rabbi to wait a minute before he blew the shofar, which tells God once and for all that we're in His hands. This person didn't ask the Rabbi to wait. He told the Rabbi. He had quite a nerve on him, to make such a command. I wanted to tell Ribiloff he should sit down, but I was afraid of this guy, which knew the criminal element in town.

Then Ribiloff took boxes out of his coat and passed them around. I didn't want to guess what was in them. I just waited till the boxes came to my bench. And who could have guessed it? Snuff was in them! 'Toast Snuff', of London of England, yet! Real fancy, wrapped in thin paper. It got passed to all the men, all the women, all the children. And no one could say pish-posh, not even the Rabbi, a new man from Scranton which didn't use his authority. Everyone was afraid of Nathan Ribiloff, even men that were bigger and stronger than him. It was a silence for a long time.

Then Ribiloff said in a voice so the roof shook: "Wake up, then! Wake up, then! Wake up, then! Wake up already!" and everybody took a pinch snuff. I ask Louie if he ever had snuff but I don't think I let him answer. Inside my head was a bomb attack and the whole world blew apart and I could feel glass break in my mind and then I opened my eyes. Ribiloff shouted one more time: "Wake up, then!" and the shofar blew louder than Ribiloff's voice and then I felt the tears. I wanted to yell: "Here we are! Here we are, then! We still here, God!" and I looked around and the whole shul was crying their eyes out and men were yelling things in Yiddish and English and a woman fainted and even Ribiloff was crying, he should rest in peace. God give him a hand, he should rest in peace!

At this point I stop talking because I don't have a thing to say—imagine that!—and I have no breath. For a long time Louie looks at me. Then he says in a whisper that he always liked to hear about the old time. He says in a whisper that it's a fine thing to hear about, thank you very much uncle Mort. But he's still a pale fish. It still wouldn't matter to him, even though he won't say that to me. This I can tell. I am not a dope. I don't have my breath back and there's nothing to tell him. He gives me a kiss and he says goodbye and he walks out. God give me a knock on the head, he walks out. □

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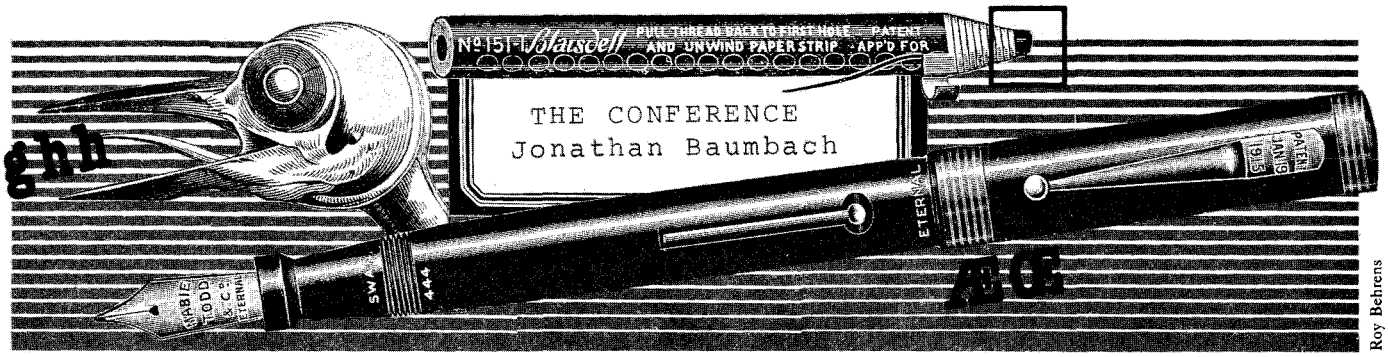

Roy Behrens

A writer travels to a conference where he is to give a talk on other writers and participate on a panel discussing some issue of the day. He gives the talk, says only some of the things he intends, meets other writers, drinks with them. He goes to a reception for a famous Russian poet, who is the main guest of the conference. After that, he goes to a reading by the famous poet. There is another reception after the reading and the promise of several parties, but the writer avoids them all and goes to his motel room to sleep. The room is impersonal and unfamiliar. The writer is exhausted but unable to lose consciousness. He puts on the overhead light and writes for a few minutes in his notebook, describing briefly his experiences at the conference. Although he has had a lot to drink, he takes a Valium with a glass of water, worrying when it is done that he has endangered his life. Then he lies down on the bed with his hands under his head, thinking about what he has written. An hour passes. He considers that he is wasting time trying to sleep and gets up and walks about the room. The room is an odd configuration in the dark, is not as he remembered it in the light. He doesn't dare look at his watch, afraid of knowing how early it is, how much dead time he has still to get through. Why did he come to this conference? he asks himself. He turns on a lamp next to the television set, the ghostly light sliding along the wall. He leafs through the pages of a book of poems someone has given him, reading first and last lines, then turns off the lamp and goes back to sleep. His dreams are uneventful. There is not even the beginnings of a story in them.

He wakes up at 7:30, does some exercises (the same ones he does at home each morning), then takes a bath.

At ten after eight he goes out for breakfast, meets another visiting writer and they eat together. They talk about failed marriages and difficulties with children. They discover that they've had a number of similar experiences and decide to go for a walk in the country instead of returning to their rooms.

They pursue a country path in the general direction of the university at which the conference is being held, and find themselves temporarily lost. Their conversation is a continuation of what went before, is strewn with wives and children, with other writers, with friends they have in common. It is a beautiful day and they walk for a longer time than they had intended, each involved in his own elaborated past and how it is mirrored in the other's.

They return to the conference in the early afternoon for what is to be the main event of the second day, an Open Conversation with the famous Russian poet. The auditorium is filled and they are obliged to sit in the last row. The poet, who seems shy off the stage, has exceptional presence on, and even his most banal remarks are delivered with a solemnity and grace that enlivens them.

"The rest of us are here as spear carriers for him," the writer says to his companion.

His companion, he notices, has fallen asleep.

In answer to a question, the poet mentions that in Russia each of his books sells upwards of two hundred thousand copies.

Someone in the audience asks the Russian who his favorite American poets are.

The Russian poet hesitates before answering, though it is a question, the writer imagines, he has answered many times before. He will answer the question, the celebrity says, by naming those poets whose work he feels is closest to his own oeuvre. Gary Snyder, he says, and of course Allen. The list extends itself, is as long as tact requires. The last name the famous poet mentions, the name brought up as an afterthought to his answer, is Bob Dylan.

Five years ago, the writer thinks, a student audience would have broken into applause at that point. This audience, heavy with respect, accepts the information as if it were its due.

After the interview with the famous poet is completed, the writer finds he has fifteen minutes to get ready for his own final performance. His mind, he discovers, is not on the subject of his panel but on whether they will have a car to get him to the airport after the panel is over.

He asks his companion, less joke than he makes it sound, if he knows what their subject is. His companion says he isn't sure, has lost his program, but that he thinks it's entitled, "The Esthetics of the New Fiction," or something to that effect.

The writer imagines the three panelists sitting on the stage, offering the audience an hour of silence.

The writer goes up on the stage with the others, trusting his remarks to chance. The third panelist, also without a program, has a wholly different idea of the topic, has come prepared to talk about the process of his own writing.

They are asked by the Assistant Director of the Conference not to start until some more people arrive. There are only two people in the audience as they sit down on the stage. One is reading a student newspaper; the other, after staring nervously about the empty auditorium, closes her eyes.

The panelists decide to wait another ten minutes before beginning, discussing procedure in whispers among themselves, the live microphone on the table picking some of it up and broadcasting it to the small audience. The writer, it is agreed, will make his statement last.

JONATHAN BAUMBACH's most recent books are a novel, Chez Charlotte and Emily, *and a collection of stories,* The Return of Service. *He teaches at Brooklyn College.*

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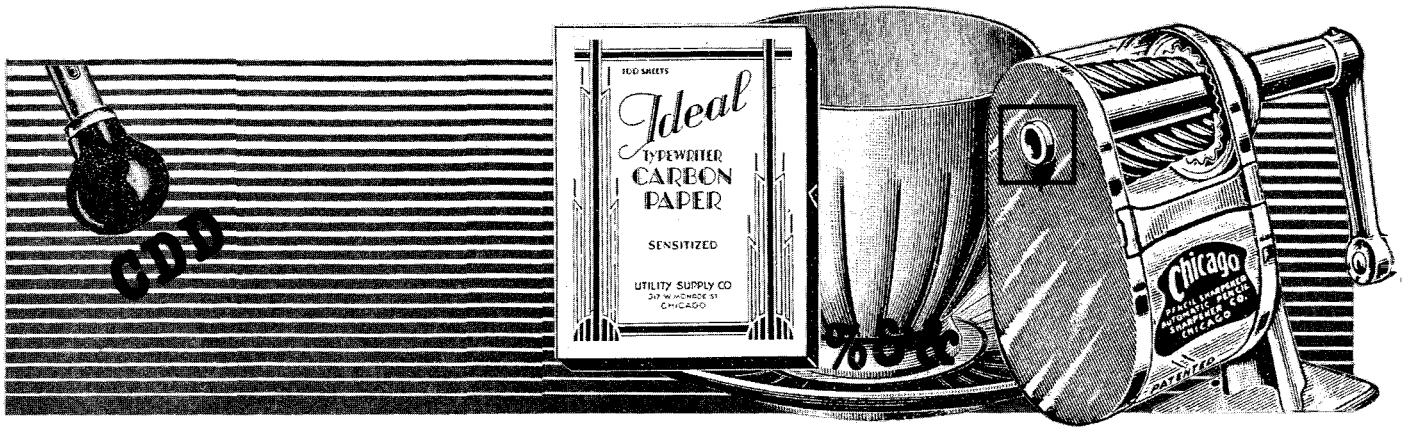

Two more people come in, seat themselves in the back row close to the aisle. Another straggler follows, looks embarrassed and turns and leaves. The woman who has closed her eyes begins to snore, attracting amused notice.

Fifteen minutes pass. Audience and panel exchange shy glances. The writer looks at his watch. He has to be at the airport in an hour and ten minutes to make his flight.

Gradually, the discussion starts. Since there is no clear subject at issue, the subject becomes the panelists themselves. The small audience—there are now seven in all—listen in with the anxiety (or so it seems to the writer) of being trapped in a place they don't want to be. Their faces remind him of pictures he's seen of prisoners of war.

When it is the writer's turn to speak, he finds himself unable to begin.

"I am a Jew," he says after a while as a means of introducing himself, a remark he had no intention of making and which embarrasses him to hear, "though not conventionally religious. I am most aware of being Jewish in places where everyone else is not. In the army, for example," (he has not been in the army for twenty years) "I went to services every Friday night except when the opportunity was denied me. To know that is essential to an understanding of my work.

"I have been married three times, though am not at the present. That is to say, I am separated from my third wife. I have difficulty living alone—perhaps this is a universal paradox—though cherish privacy, indeed need it in order to write. I have had three children, one by each of my wives. Their ages are twelve, nine and four. None lives with me, though the twelve-year-old, Arthur, did at one time. Visiting with them is an ordeal for me, particularly with the youngest. I identify with him, I think, suffer the pangs of separation when I return him to his mother. It's as if my father were leaving me. I don't mind living alone, have come to appreciate the freedom it offers, though since the break-up of my most recent marriage, I have had three different women stay with me for short periods of time. What I am looking for eludes me. I am a monogamous man, or like to think of myself as such. I haven't had an extra-marital affair that hasn't left me with grief and feelings of guilt."

Why am I going on like this? he asks himself. The faces around him, in the audience and on the stage, provide no answer.

"I don't mean to expose myself to you this way," he says, "but this is the only subject on which I have pretensions to expertise." (Wait for the laugh, he tells himself, aware that he is a performer on a stage.) "When you are away from home and have nothing specific to do, you think about your life. Perhaps *you* don't and I do. All morning I talked about my life to a friend I hardly know. I am in the mood to continue if you are in the mood to listen. The esthetic of my work is to write what it pleases me to write. I can't explain that in philosophic terms—I never think of it abstractly—but I can exemplify it for you in my performance. All right?"

The writer stops again and looks around the mostly naked auditorium. There is sympathy, he thinks, in the eyes of at least one of his eavesdroppers. That sympathy—perhaps it is only that she is thinking of something moving in her own life—impells him to continue.

"Despite the apparent evidence against it, I am a monogamous man and a domestic one. I like comfort and elegance—I drive an old Mercedes sedan prohibitively expensive to maintain—and can think of nothing more desirable than to be surrounded by wife, children and intimate friends. Yet, at this juncture of my life, at the age of forty-four, I am living alone and valuing the benefits of that solitude. All right? My most recent wife, Felice, left me because I was sleeping with other women, though she didn't actually move out until six months after that part of my life was over. That's what makes me angry—both sad and angry—that she waited until I had committed myself unequivocally to our marriage then left me for someone else. Had she stayed, I believe I would have remained faithful to her for as long as we were together. I think it took me five years of marriage to fall in love with her. That's an odd thing to say, isn't it? We never should have gotten married in the first place. I met Felice at a writer's conference similar to this one. I was married at the time to Helena, my second, though that was already on the rocks. Felice had the motel room two doors down from mine. I couldn't sleep and went out for a walk at three in the morning. Her light was on. She was reading a book. What do the circumstances matter? The book she was reading was one of mine. How could I resist that omen? Although outside her door, I was already in her hands.

"In about fifteen minutes there is supposed to be a car outside to take me to the airport, so I don't want to get carried away. I am hoping, it is my method in all things, to bring this statement to a conclusive point, to discover its point, and leave some time for my colleagues to make whatever further comments they have in store. Bear with me. I think there is an intelligible core to my ramblings, an informing idea, as critics like to say. I am neither drunk nor insane, at least not so insane as to have it an issue between us. You have come to this conference—I am talking also to those who are not here—to see ——, who is a famous poet. Justly famous. A visitor from a far planet. The rest of us are here to fill out the conference with peripheral activity. We are the curtain raisers and anti-climaxes surrounding the main event. When I sit down to

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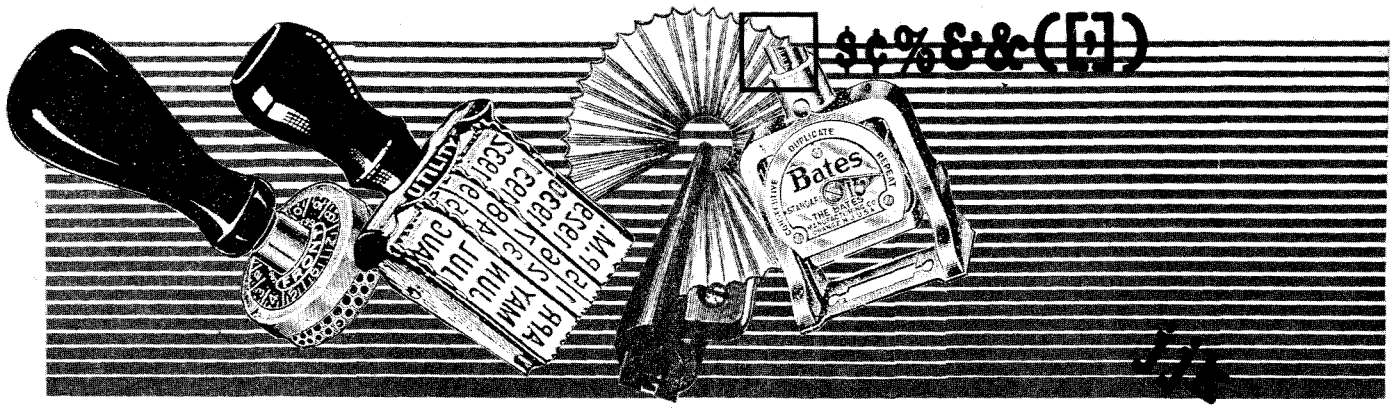

write in my apartment, denuded of wives and children, denuded of life-filling distractions, I am the main event myself. I miss that momentarily, regret the loss of my own centrality. For that reason, perhaps for others I don't understand, instead of talking about esthetics, which I never think of in connection with my own work, I told you something about my life, about its peculiar though undistinctive disarray. While I am telling you about this serious comedy, my life, I am reimagining it as a fiction, I am. . . . "

His friend next to him nudges him with an elbow, which is fortunate since he is caught in his last sentence without hope of extrication. "It's time for you to leave for the airport," he says.

The writer, in a state of exhilaration, excuses himself and gets down from the podium. The woman, who was asleep, wakes herself to applaud.

When he gets outside the auditorium, there is no car waiting for him, though it is already five minutes past the appointed time. The writer, in a state of panic, locates the Assistant Director of the Conference and is told the university car has gone to get the Russian poet, and unless there is a further misunderstanding will come back for the writer in a few minutes.

So he sits on the steps of the buiding, waiting, his exhilaration metamorphosing into depression, checking his watch from time to time. He assumes that he has been forgotten, that the car will not show up, though continues to wait out of inertia, his imagination failing him in regard to other choices.

Finally, the car arrives. The Russian poet, impassive as ever, is in the front seat next to the driver. The writer is introduced to the famous poet. The Russian, he can tell, has never heard of him. The writer sits in the back seat next to the poet's luggage. Unless his watch is misinformed, they have twenty minutes to get to the airport. He is surprised that no one else is concerned with the shortness of time.

They arrive at the airport four minutes before the plane's scheduled departure. The driver, who is also one of the organizers of the conference, carries the famous poet's luggage, while the writer carries his own, an overnight bag and a briefcase filled mostly with his own books.

The writer sits next to the famous poet on the flight and they make a few awkward attempts at conversation.

The writer asks the famous poet how much longer he'll be in America.

The poet says that he'll be on tour for three more weeks.

The writer asks the poet how old he is and the poet, noticeably surprised at the question, says he is forty-two.

The writer asks the poet if he finds it wearing to move from university to university, never staying at any one place long enough to have any real sense of what it's like.

The poet says, no, he is used to it, that it is all right. The travel is not . . . against his pleasure.

The writer, though aware he is talking about something else, says he gets no pleasure from such trips himself and usually avoids them.

The writer becomes self-consciously aware of the banality of his conversation, would like to say something of larger import to the poet, though doesn't know where to begin.

"What do you write?" the poet asks him, turning from the window to inquire.

Although the poet's enunciation tends to be precise, the writer misunderstands the question and proceeds to justify his practice as a writer in the face of a small, vaguely comprehending audience. He can hear himself go on too long.

"I asked *what* you write," says the poet sternly.

"Fiction," says the writer, "mostly short stories. There are two novels." He thinks of giving the famous poet one of his books, though is embarrassed to make the gesture.

"I like American novels," says the famous poet. "I like U——"[a celebrated novelist] "whom I met in Leningrad and again in Boston. Do you know him?"

"I've met him once," says the writer. "To be frank, I don't really like his work."

"It is sexy," says the famous poet, smiling and turning to the window. "That is what I like about it that it is sexy."

They complete the flight to La Guardia without further conversation. The writer imagines a further exchange between them in the extended silence. He writes their unspoken dialogue down in a notebook he keeps in the breast pocket of his jacket.

Someone from the Russian embassy awaits the poet. The writer nods goodbye, avoiding the awkward excess of a further gesture, then takes a cab back to his apartment in the West 20's. Before taking off his jacket, before making himself a drink, he visits each of his five rooms. The apartment is the way the writer left it the morning before to go to the airport, familiar and bereft, the debris in its own reasonable order, the rooms conspicuously empty of other life. He hangs up his jacket in the foyer closet, sits down at the desk in his study and in long-hand on a legal-size sheet of yellow paper begins a story. It starts well, he thinks, admiring the rhythm of his opening paragraph, but what will happen to it along the way? He imagines the Russian poet reading over his shoulder. There will be no sex in it, none or very little. The story goes on as he wants it, resists all pressure to make it other than it is. □

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CHRISTOPHER BUCKLEY

QUECHUA

Grey heights walled by rain,
the doves have flown
invisibly before the clouds.
I pull my hat down
and play my flute
so the animals know me,
so I can recall my heart
which has drifted off
like a dove lifting for the sun.

We come here and leave,
crawl and are carried out,
in the wool of our herds—
the llama is our strength,
the alpaca our warmth; always
we have attended one another.
We wove the royal ones' cloth,
gone now with their patterns—
sunlight, spider, bird,
gone with the ancient
gold of their days.
Our looms are now a few sticks
pinned into the earth;
we spin and block the simple lines,
red squares, black squares,
the first song and the last.

No horizon to speak of.
Only when we pack down
to the river and steaming trees
for the corn and wood,
can we look up to a sky
bundled on the mountains' back,
the hard shoulders that hold us here.
A slight way down we dig
stones from the ground
to plant potatoes, to place our dead.
We know stones as we know the cold,
they grey face of each; we know
them as we know our feet
on the long trails.

Until the months of light return
we are the descendants of wind,
the high dark eyes and heart of air—
like the knives of the soul
that loosen us from this place,
we listen to the voices of the dead
in this wind. Is it not natural
to be sad waiting for the sun's arms
to take them up? Huddled among stones,
this life is a spark struck from stone.

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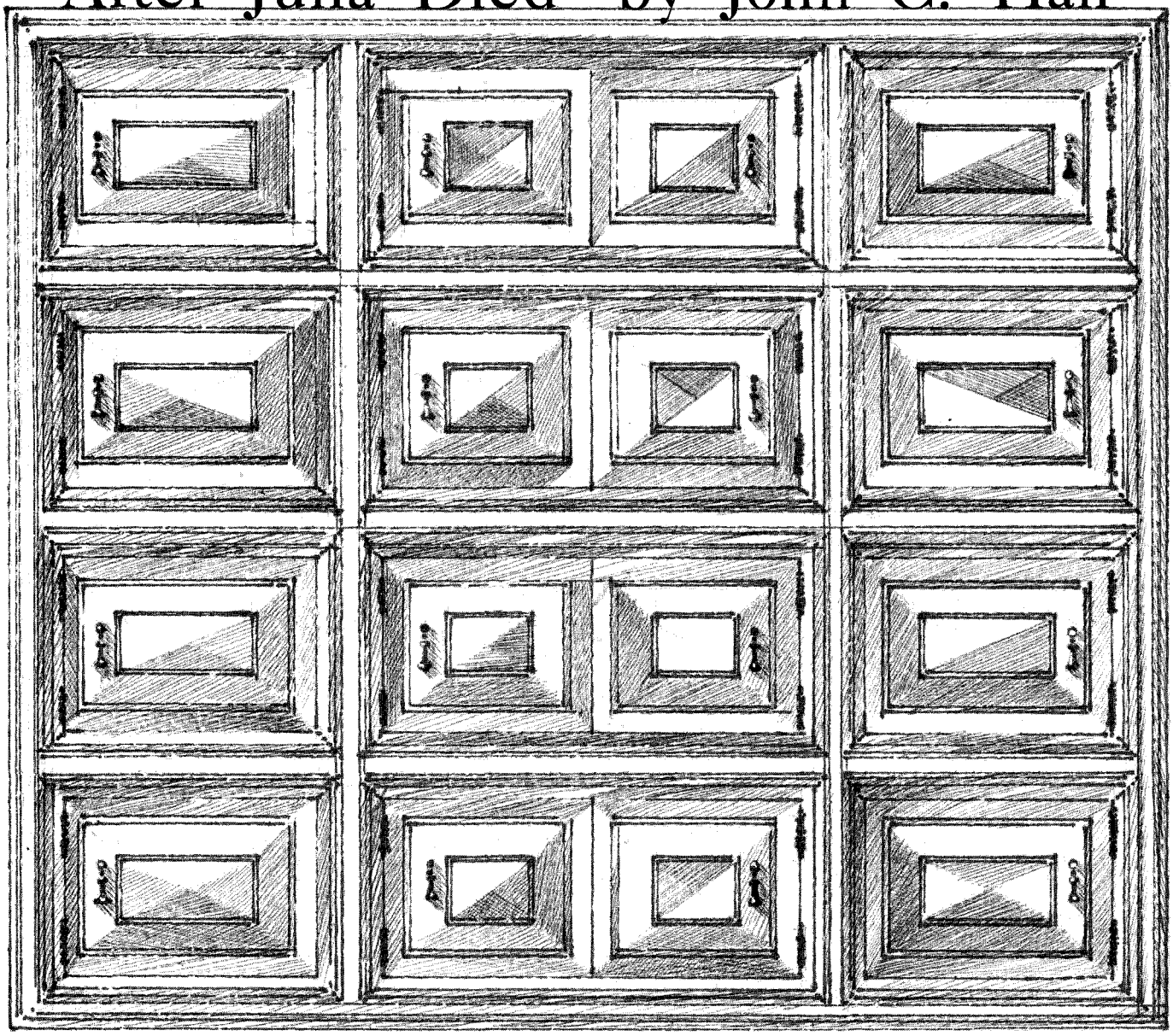
After Julia Died by John C. Hall



Charles Vansen

After Julia died the nurse left that velveteen cushion underneath her so that her head fell back and her mouth hung wide open. Florence, Julia's mother, was crushed to find the girl not only lifeless but ungracefully posed. The death was expected. When she was thirteen the doctors had found tumors and given her only a year. But the nurse left her like that, between the horse-printed sheets, looking as if she'd drowned. Julia's lips were fat, or was it that they didn't taper enough in the corners? They had a habit of curling outward to expose partially their mucusy inner walls. Father Cordis made it shut; he came wearing his linen collar and striped charcoal suit, said the blessings. Receive her into the hands . . . or arms? . . . of mercy, company of the saints in light. His thin tanned fingers compared to her own white puffy ones, his elegant ring.

JOHN C. HALL is an ordained minister in Hyannis, Massachusetts. Other fiction of his has appeared in the Michigan Quarterly Review.

Florence had seen only one other dead body, her father when she was fourteen. The last glimpse from the rear of the church: his pink face sticking up against the vanilla satiny lining, the gilt casket on a turquoise underblanket. She and Harold had agreed to keep Julia's casket closed because of the ravages of her illness. Florence could not decide whether her black dress lessened or heightened her corpulence. Patterns were a thing in themselves, stripes for instance, horizontal ones. Now it was the day after the funeral and she was happy that her living room was filled with people. Her moist walnut eyes looked up at Gwen, her brother-in-law's wife.

"You'd think a nurse would have sense enough. A bandage, a napkin, anything."

For the first time, Gwen noticed the hunting scene woven into the rust and orange carpet below the sandwich table. Ducks, men in a boat with shotguns, a dog perhaps or another man bent over. The rest was clouds, ripples, bullrushes.

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"She could have tied it shut with a necktie if nothing else," Florence continued, though she knew it was futile to do so. Gwen had been orphaned in childhood, and Florence imagined that her parents, whoever they were, had dropped her on a doorstep. She pictured Gwen in rags, along with the other orphans, getting her meals ladled out of pots. The fact that Gwen could not even say whether her real parents were dead or alive, or, if dead, what ground they were under, helped to explain both why she was a dry stick and why the hope of getting any sympathy from her was preposterous.

"What did you do then?" Gwen asked.

"Waited—there was nothing else to do—for Father Cordis. He took the pillow from underneath and put it behind her head. Then it closed." And she remembered how, though at first afraid of the dead body, she had touched her daughter's cheek, then kissed it, wetting the cheek with her tears while it was still warm and still smelled like her, of course, vaguely like smelling herself under the bedclothes. Was there something morbid in that? The nurse stayed the whole time by the door, wouldn't leave a mother alone so it wasn't surprising she hadn't had the brains . . . Christ, she could have used a scarf so she wouldn't show her gums and the spaces between her teeth just like her father. A fine way to remember.

"I mean, I even said to her—and I think she was very young for a nurse if you want to know—I said it would be nice, could we do something 'bout her mouth? I bet Julia's the first dead, uh, person she ever . . ."

"I wouldn't doubt it," Gwen agreed.

Florence cocked her head.

"That would be upsetting," Gwen added.

Then Florence shook her head. The back doorbell had not rung, she decided, so she breathed deeply and slouched again. "We're through with her now, the nurse I mean. Practically led her around, I did, pointing her in this direction and that, leaving notes."

Gwen thought of the time standing with Ellen, the nurse, at the bedside, when Ellen was trying to cheer up Julia.

"Should I teach you how to use the blood pressure cuff?" Ellen offered. "Want to hear?" She spread the prongs of the stethoscope and fit them into Julia's ears. But Julia could not do it, could not hear when the beating stopped or started again.

"What about your aunt?" Ellen brushed over the moment of Julia's failure and turned to Gwen. "Like to try?"

On the second or third attempt she had succeeded in taking a reading, though she pretended not to. From that day she liked Ellen, who had grown up on a farm near Bemidji, Minnesota, and spoke in short, Swedish diphthongs. She always wore the white dress and white stockings; her maple-colored hair lay across her ears like an Indian's. Because it was Florence's habit to find fault, Gwen was sure that she, like Ellen, was on the dirtlist. She could imagine Florence and Harold both ripping into her, calling her selfish because she never did a favor, when it wasn't because she didn't want to, Gwen would answer. It just seldom occurred to her. But oh, Florence would protest, that's the whole bloomin' point—she used that a lot, *bloomin'*, a British affectation—that's the whole bloomin' point that you don't think of it.

Florence realized that it had been twenty years now since her father died, and that her mother was still grieving, probably would grieve until she too was gone. The case with her parents, though, was different than having a child sick for more than two years, moaning in her sleep, which then started Becky and Stephen sobbing. They never could have paid the nurse entirely out of their own pockets, at forty dollars a day, and even at that price she hadn't had the sense to tie up her chin, so it hung there, a dark hole when Florence came up to see her dead for the first time. Her child, dead. But then she compared herself to Gwen, whose womb was barren, and she could scarcely imagine Gwen and Ray love-making in the first place—Ray on top of her every time, she like a scarecrow, marking his quota on the headboard, probably once a month. Harold, her own husband and Ray's brother, was no Romeo either, but at least *she* put something into it, groaned a little or rolled on top. Whereas Gwen she pictured grinding her teeth, toes stiffened, wrinkled forehead.

"You've been very kind, in any case, just knowing you're here," Florence said.

"If there's something I can—"

"It's the children I'm worried about. They think Julia's in the hospital again."

"Uh huh," Gwen answered. "I mean, if you want me to take them someplace, in the car . . ."

Then Florence was thinking how Father Cordis, simply by putting the pillow behind Julia's neck, had closed her mouth neat as a jack-in-the-box. Only a few weeks before she had confessed to him, as she often did, wondering what made her, once she got started, spit out the dirtiest dirt she could think of, what made her say even that she'd had her husband's thing in her mouth and the priest just sat there calm as a lamb, looking at her, turning the ring around on his finger. Confessions used to be with a curtain in-between, but she liked it better in the light of day. Yes, even Harold stood to learn a thing or two from the priest but she was glad, secretly, that he didn't confess; he'd tell he'd had his tongue down there, which disgusted her anyway, but Father Cordis might think she liked it. In other ways too, it would be different for a man with a man priest.

Gwen was now standing even closer to the coffee and sandwich trays; at her breastbone the fingers of each hand arched to meet those of the other, forming a triangular cage.

"I don't believe it's after three already," Gwen said, looking again at the sandwiches.

"Yes, take one. They're just sitting there." Florence decided that the tray did not yet need replenishing. She watched Gwen bend over the quartered, crustless sandwiches, inspecting them, certain to pick one from the bottom that hadn't been handled, since Gwen hated the thought of anyone's skin; it was little wonder she sat home most of the time. People did make their own hell. But if

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that was true, what had she herself done to deserve . . . ? Julia was resting now, in the pitch black, which was better than burning up inside as she had been. Could her daughter see her? That was hard to believe but she would pray that night, as she had intended to pray for the last two or three nights, but Harold had been snoring, which made a farce of it, and her headaches too had been worse, which, admittedly, in themselves were no excuse. She picked up the coffee pot and drained the last thick drops into her cup, unstuck the top, and peered inside. That was three pots now, or just two?

"Can I help?" Gwen offered.

"Of course not. Stay where you are," Florence scolded, and carried the entire coffee and cream tray into the kitchen.

It was because Gwen did not want genuinely to help that Florence would not think of letting her. And yet there was a sense in which the death had brought out the generosity one hardly saw in people, in Mrs. Kritzer who had made the sandwiches, how it brought all of them closer and lent almost an air of celebration to the afternoon. Yesterday, standing not more than three feet from the coffin she had caught herself asking Harold if they should, of all things, take the gladiolas home. But her brain, like everyone's, wanted to shut things out. Plus, it was almost a relief not having her sick, not paying the nurse, as awful as it was to think that, and so she had pretended, had even forced out extra tears so as not to look hard as leather. She did love Julia, she loved her, even though she wasn't the prettiest child and when she was a baby no one could force out "Oh, what a cute sweet baby." No one would lie.

Outside the window, Becky and Stephen were playing in the sandbox as if nothing had happened. Stephen had made a big mountain, perhaps a castle, with his trucks lined up around the bottom. Becky, the younger one, was arguing about something Florence couldn't hear. How complete their world was, how clean when they didn't know the smells of sex and dying as Florence did. Could she say, honestly, that life became easier, that experience had not exhausted but rather had helped her, when the children were stooping there outside in their short pants and sandals, their skin as smooth as the cream she was now pouring. Sometime it would be nice to drink a whole glass of it straight, sliding it down. It seemed as though she could march right back up the stairs and find Julia just as she had been for the last months, half asleep. The percolator started and she decided to wait there for it. Surely, during the next days there would be a chance to crawl into Julia's bed which still had the same sheets on it, which she herself had made up purposely in order to leave it so, in order to be close to her again. Then, as if it had happened so long ago, or happened again that instant—the memory: her daughter was dead. Julia was dead, and here she was making coffee.

Amidst the other guests, Gwen stood folding her napkin into ever smaller squares and noticed, when she picked out no one's voice in particular and didn't listen to what was being said, the crescendo of the voices buzzing. Gwen had not always been able to admit, even to herself, that she hated parties, though could she call this a party, when Julia had been buried just yesterday? Oh the things, if she'd known in advance, if she'd known when she was seven years old for example, waiting on the back steps because her mother wasn't there when she got home from school, when she spread her palms on the hot sandstone and the sun almost burned the top of her head. "I just forgot to leave the key under the jar lid," her mother had said. If she had known then, as she knew now by the way all these people, deep inside, were relishing Julia's death, the event it made, could she have gone through all those years? At least she would not have to stay much longer; it was almost four, in fact, so as soon as Florence came back she might excuse herself. From where she was standing she would catch Ray's eye. Later, that night, while Ray went to bed she would sit outside on the glider—the moths flapping. She would let the delicious tiredness grow before she went upstairs too and he would be there with one foot hooked over the covers. She would undress first her bottom things then the top, pull the curtain half shut so the streetlamp wouldn't be in her eyes. The sheets would be cool and stiff. She would never understand why Florence made such a big fuss about church things, about Father Cordis and the blessing; she would not understand no matter how many years she tried.

Gwen was not a Catholic, though Ray was. She remembered one day, after he'd taken her to a football game, they sat on his mother's porch and he explained all of that about purgatory, venial and mortal sins, indulgences. To her it had sounded like a game with tokens that moved around a board like Monopoly but she kept quiet for his sake; he seemed so happy while he leaned back, serious, which made her happy too of course, because she pleased him. She had rested her cheek on the back of the sofa, thinking that was love, his looking straight into her eyes, she felt the pull of his arms though there was a foot of space between them. Certainly it wasn't the Catholic things he explained that made her melt together with him, so that the thought of them being two separate people was all the more shocking. Now you have done this, she had told herself, now he is smiling at you with all his heart and you will never be a failure.

Florence unplugged the percolator, thinking the coffee must be done, then poured a squirt into the sink. What a scant lifetime Julia had had, only fifteen years that came and went so fast that Florence recalled only with difficulty a time when she wasn't sick, at least when she was well enough to sit at her dressing table and comb her own hair. Florence remembered her daughter's bulbous knuckles holding the brush, but soon she had gotten too weak to hang on to it, so the nurse combed it for her, though less often, so it all wouldn't come out. Florence supposed that Julia had liked being pampered too; there were so few things she could eat, like cereal and juice. Was there a heaven? she wondered. She was positive there must be, since after her own father died she prayed Daddy, if you can hear me give one sign, one little sign, then I'll believe. Then Bobby was playing "Swanee River" on the flutophone. How else could you explain that? Still, that

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was a long time ago and the experiment didn't seem to count anymore. And Julia had looked so dead with her mouth open, too bad such an ugly mouth—Florence's last memory—rather the lips, pulled back so far they showed the gums. At least no one had seen but the nurse and Father Cordis.

Then she carried the coffee and fresh cream out on a tray. By the time she reached the living room, small amounts of each had jostled from the spouts, forming two cohering pools on the tray surface. She sopped these dry with cocktail napkins.

"Let me help," Gwen offered when Florence was practically finished.

"Nonsense, I can manage," Florence answered as she deposited the wet napkins in her own empty cup.

"We must be going soon. I haven't started dinner yet," Gwen apologized as she looked at her watch again, wound it, and showed it to Florence as proof that she had stayed long enough.

But Florence was not surprised, having known for years how impossible Gwen was to please, how she silently criticized everything and could not bring herself to make even false compliments. Perhaps Gwen was better educated; she was willing to admit that, and so she answered: "Of course, I understand." Perhaps Gwen had finished college while Florence hadn't, but Florence would rather be ignorant than the dry cracker that Gwen was, as if that were precisely the choice women had—to be a melon or a cracker. In any case, love passed too, though she and Harold had had something for about a year. Now she daydreamed about the priest, as silly as that sounded, but Father Cordis wouldn't see her more than once a week. There had been times when she had wanted to lie at his feet, even kiss them like Jesus kissing, no, washing the feet of his disciples. A woman needed that feeling or she would turn dry and crumbly like Gwen. And she would never understand how two brothers had picked them, when Gwen was so crusty inside that no one could touch her and even her wedding gown had been propped up with stays and rubber so it was obvious there was nothing in there. Men liked something to wet their lips on, after all, some fresh strawberries or peaches. But even she herself was getting old now; she knew that pots of flesh were growing below her eyes. She looked at Gwen's authentic-looking pearls.

"It was so pleasant," Gwen added, but no sooner were the words out of her mouth than she realized what an awful thing that was to say, when Julia had just died. It was no wonder Florence hated her, considering what popped out of her mouth, like laughing at the soufflé someone brought to potluck which turned out to be Florence's.

But something else was bothering her, something she'd forgotten, so that in her memory she turned off the stove again and watched herself returning Florence's mixer. Or had she meant to get something back that Florence had borrowed, a book most probably, since that was Florence's habit—on a whim, to take from Gwen's shelves any book with big print and not read more than a page or two. Was that it? All Gwen would need was an hour to poke through Florence's things and God knew what she'd find of hers, and she was glad at least that she'd put her name in all the flyleaves with her rubber stamp. Was that it? If and when Florence did give them back, Gwen would look for spots of jelly and chocolate stuck to the pages. But there was something else slipping her mind, something she was thinking at the moment Florence came back with the coffee, spilling some, which distracted her and made her think of leaving, which caused that inexplicable guilt. How her mind wandered, skitting around, like a rat in the dark! How obvious she never helped, when Mrs. Kritzer, not even a relative, had brought the sandwiches.

But even if Gwen's remark—it was pleasant—wasn't sincere, Florence could not help being flattered by it, just as she had been flattered by the first guests she and Harold had ever had. She remembered how scared both of them had been beforehand, and what had they served? Meatballs, she believed, toast points and angel food. She had to admit that Gwen's pearls did look real. It *was* pleasant, a cool day, plenty of sandwiches, coffee, and twelve people—about the right number. Melissa, the poor lonely girl had spent almost the whole time in the new chair by the hutch but now Jim and Grace were chatting with her. Pleasant—it was something for Gwen to say that. Florence tried, no one could hold that back, no one could say she didn't give her life for her family. Someone had to. Her eyes went to the upper shelf of the hutch and she thought an old clock would be good there, would add an antique touch. But the kitchen! It was the kitchen that desperately needed fixing up, so she thought of paying one of the neighbor boys to sand the paint runs off the cupboards. Someone had to give her life—otherwise what would the world be? Even some flock wallpaper would be nice, expensive as it was. So pleasant. When you consider when was the last time she made anyone a compliment. Imagine her saying that.

At that instant Gwen recovered her train of thought—the afternoon on Ray's mother's porch. A whole lifetime could be seen in those moments of love, when one talked but the other listened only for the clues to her future happiness. That first time Ray had wanted a beer with his supper, she had thought, "Can I love a man who wants beer every night with his supper?" But if all that he was saying about the sacraments of the church was so important, he would be a faithful husband, she was sure, even though she had no interest in the sacraments herself. How abandoned she had felt at the time, wishing to be crushed by the sheer weight of him, wishing that feeling would be the end and she had squeezed the muscles of his leg as though she would never have to think again, be envious again. Could she be envious of a woman who had lost her daughter? She had not thought of such things years ago, those few minutes on the porch when his voice played over something she knew nothing about, cared nothing about, and perhaps for that reason she became drunk with the sound of it. His starched cuffs and collar—how foolish she had been—his handsome nose. □

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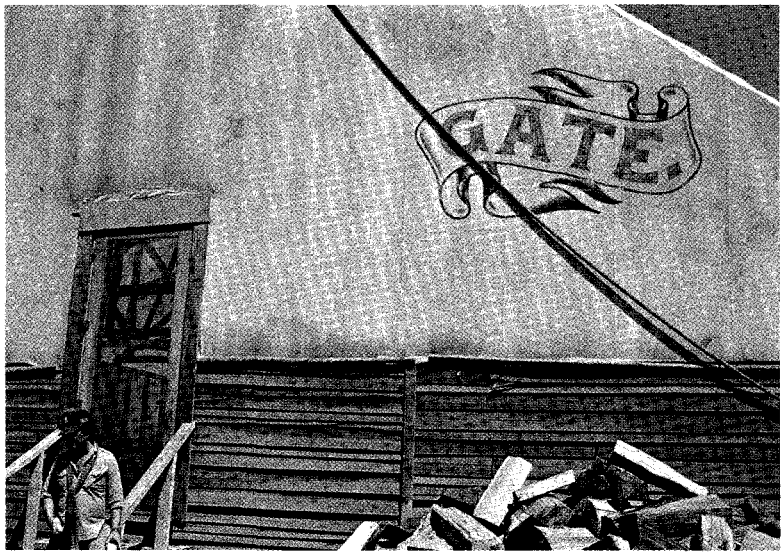
Greg Leichner

ON LOCATION IN MONTANA



An Extra's View of Michael Cimino's "Heaven's Gate"

I rise at four a.m. I collect my wits (they are lying face-down on the carpet), shower, and make the half-hour drive from Bigfork to Kalispell. The windshield is frosted. Even in late May clear skies bring frigid nights. I pass a pick-up, careful with it, then slip back into half-dream. The sky begins to show light, to reveal the first of the day's cloud shapes.

Just before five I pull into a grassy field already full with neat lines of cars and trucks. Men are lined up at the quonset's side door waiting to check in and change into wardrobe. I enter wearing faded jeans, a blue corduroy shirt, and holey unlaced sneakers. Into a cloud of bus fumes I emerge in muddy black leather boots, baggy wool pants, a collarless shirt with a silver stud for the top button, a brown vest, a shabby ill-fitting coat, and a wide-brimmed hat pulled low.

Packed into schoolbuses we ride through town and out to a semi-rural development. We unload at the temporary end of an ever-expanding bubble of cul-de-sacs where stands what looks like extensive damage from a recent tornado. The second floor of the Two Oceans Hotel sits to the left feeling severed. The slope of its steep-pitched saddle roof ends in mud.

To the right is a duplex-size upright structure of tarpaper, flapping rolled-plastic, and crisscrossing two-by-fours whose nails are never completely sunk. This is the Blue Rooster Saloon. Inside under high ceiling is a long wide hall, cherrywood bar at one end and a cockfight pit at the other.

Late morning, eighty immigrants line up at the side door to the Blue Rooster. I am in the first group of fifteen to enter. Once inside we line up again in an arc before Cimino. The room is hazy. Dust and cigar smoke are adrift in the yellow light. The secondary actors have been placed around the knee-high wall of the pit. Some with lighted stogies, they lean back in their wooden chairs, prop their feet and wait.

At Cimino's direction the first extra chosen moves back and forth across the pit to various points, various poses, up and down the logpile behind the pit, into and out of chairs. He ends up with an old-fashioned amber beer bottle in his left hand, leaning his right shoulder into a roof-supporting log post.

"And you, please." (Me?) "Will you sit just behind Norbet. This way a little. Lean forward. Good."

The camera is on a two-railed tubular track that runs the length of the beerhall. With everyone placed, Cimino turns his attention to his cinematographer, Vilmos Szigmond. Around the pit the banter begins, "My name is Joe," "Isn't this a gas," and of course the inevitable cock jokes. Mike Grillo, first assistant director, calls for quiet. "Rehearsal!"

The cocks are brought in but will not be released. The bottles are filled with beer but are not to be drunk. And we are to be only partially boisterous.

"Half-speed," says Grillo. "A-a-and, action!"

Kristofferson's stand-in enters the back door, sidles through the low-key hubbub, and clomps down the hall to

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GREG LEICHNER is living in Bonner, Montana.

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the bar. The camera follows him on silent bearings, pushed by assistants.

We run through it again. This time Vilmos slips out of the bucket seat behind the camera and Cimino takes the ride, his right eye pressed to the camera's viewfinder.

There are gestures of agreement. Cimino calls for Special Effects. Two men arrive, each with a can of hot coals, a bellows, and a small pizza paddle for wafting. They fill the entire hall with resin smoke. It becomes 1892.

"Quiet, please, quiet!" calls Grillo. Outside the order echoes on bullhorns with the addendum, "Cut all engines!"

The cocks fitted with fake spurs are brought in. Jeff Bridges appears in high Turkish boots sporting a black-handled squeezer in a shoulder holster.

"This will be picture!" calls Grillo.

My character is my own invention. I have only a vague hold on him, a German immigrant intermingled in the multi-lingual, drunken ruckus of a Wyoming cockfight.

"We're rolling!"

The cockhandlers circle the ring parading the animals. The room grows loud and thick with smoke and fetid breath.

"A-a-and, action!"

Now Bridges circles the ring. He calls out in Polish, Russian and German for bets to be placed. I am Wilhelm Gulker. I am knee-crawling drunk. I bet on the red rooster.

"*Villie! Zwanzig pfennig, rot!*"

Scene 8, Take 4: A trainload of immigrants is barreling toward Casper. Clinging to the catwalk on the roofs of two boxcars are scores of dusky, bearded men in heavy overcoats, women in shawls and babushkas, bundled children. The script-time is winter, but it's ninety degrees.

"Places, everybody!"

Paper cups and pitchers of icewater are passed down and put out of sight. Down the embankment a propman is sunning himself on a stuntmattress. Two honkers fly over. Across the highway a beaver cuts a wake in the glass pond. The engineer gives three toots.

One last drink, then I'm back inside the boxcar. Three of us are seated on cardboard boxes at a small slatted window. One is a woman, a stranger, who between takes juggles dog balls. We lurch. We hold onto the slats. "Hold onto your slats!" she laughs.

The steam engine gathers force quickly, and before we hit the bend we are highballing. Cinders from the smokestack singe beards, nick bare cheeks like hail.

We fly past Cimino standing under the camera scaffold. With a straight arm he raises his cup of coffee in salute. He is grinning, an uncontrolled, child's grin of elation, but his eyes are lost deep inside himself where he is secretly reverent, thankful.

The workday begins in the dark with a two-hour bus ride through mountain paradise to the set at Two Medicine campground in Glacier National Park. At the halfway point the schoolbus squeezes across a temporary one-lane bridge, beneath us the rubble, the remains of the old bridge and hundreds of severed pines jammed together by avalanche like pick-up-sticks. Far below, near the flooding Middle Fork of the Flathead, wild goats' stout white bodies are dots along the gray cliffs, dots asleep in patches of grass.

Eight o'clock. After Make-up we congregate at the lunch tables. Casting personnel and their co-ordinators keep watch over us. At a moment's notice we must be ready to move out. Many times we are moved *en masse* only to be told minutes later to go back from whence we came. This dance we call the Immigrant Shuffle.

We wait. Some of us play cards, some read and gab, some are dead asleep on their coatsleeves. Wranglers leading horses disappear around the bend of a dirt road that leads to Sweetwater, the town Cimino built. Assistants and assistants to assistants are either in frenetic motion the purpose of which is oft times unclear even to them, or they are stopped dead in their tracks. One through a bullhorn desperately calls out a name. "Bobby! Bobby Visiglio!" Another carries an armload of Winchesters from point A to point B, then to point C where he looks about, puzzled. From behind a fake row of lodgepole pine jumps a muffled curse. The water truck is too tall to clear the log overhang at the back entry to the set. "Get the damn chainsaw!"

The actors arrive in chauffered vans. They are normal in jeans and new down vests. They move slowly, joking, to the private dressing rooms, the honeywagons. An extra with binoculars spots three goats above a snow patch at the far shore of Two Medicine Lake. Actors and extras move toward him to take a look.

Hovering above, were you in Cimino's helicopter, it would look like this:

Out the front are the jagged peaks, massive, glorious, flexed. Equal to them is the quiet silver lake, the last of its floes bumping our shore.

Out the right the tops of white trailers and fancy truck cabs are situated like stores on Main Street: the carpentry and metal shop, the gun truck, catering, wardrobe, make-up, props, the honeywagons. Here and there are fiberglass portapotties, silver-topped coffee urns, a scrapwood fire in a rusted oil drum. Dark hats and babushkas move this way and that.

Out the left is the town of Sweetwater, 1892. At the head of the muddy street is the clapboard church of new, unpainted pine. Its steeple is capped with a three-barred cross. The church and the structure that is jointly the Two Oceans, the Blue Rooster, and the livery give some semblance of permanence. Everywhere are flimsy canvas-roofed shacks, makeshift places of business, drugstore, drygoods, hardware. Across from the hotel is Heaven's Gate, the roller arena, with unpainted plank sides and a dirty yellow canvas roof. There is not much inside this particular Heaven's Gate except haphazard supporting timbers that rest on a yellow-lined asphalt parking lot. Similarly without meaningful innards are the Two Oceans and the church. All are shells.

The co-ordinators are calling. It is time to line up and receive our weapons.

Scene 80, Take 12: The immigrants, armed and angry, storm out of Heaven's Gate. In thirty wagons teamsters are waiting, reins in hand. It is time for battle. We are pumped up with fear, our hearts demand justice!

The whole street is motion. Men and women on horseback are first to break through the mass. Others pull

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themselves onto wagonbeds or leave town at a dead run. It is chaos, but somehow it moves to a point.

I work my way among two-horse teams, then halt with a neck-cracking jerk as a rider flies past. A team starts up in front of me, I leap to the boardwalk then up onto a bench to dodge a screaming stuntrider. Ten yards away, ten yards packed with horseflesh, hard wagons and berserk humans, waits my assigned position in the back of a wagon. And now it is rolling off without me! I run to it, toss up my rifle, and dive in from the rear. We jolt past the church and out of the camera's view.

"Cut! Let's set it up again!"

We shoot this scene twenty times. The day ends when the sunlight is too weak to go on. Most everyone is bruised and scraped, a handful have more serious wounds. By the time we check out, ten o'clock, it will have been another sixteen-hour day, a 95-hour week.

The extras. We are the low-paid atmosphere, on equal footing with dust and smoke and mud, but also with mountains and lakes and the three-barred cross. We are the sheep shearer, the drama major, the housewife, the racist, the disco barmaid. We are the soft-spoken supervisor, the naïve painter, short-order cook, calligrapher, fruitpicker, orchardist. We live off our father's furniture store, our inheritance, our retirement. We squeeze by on two-bit pick-up labor, we live like kings on unemployment from three states. We are the basket case, we are the utterly unsinkable, and everything in between. On the bus ride home the former addict sits next to the grade-school child. They play Hearts.

What a club we are with our poker games and frisbees and circles of hackysack. We strum and fiddle and sing, we juggle, we joke, we get bored; we read and muse, we court and spark . . .

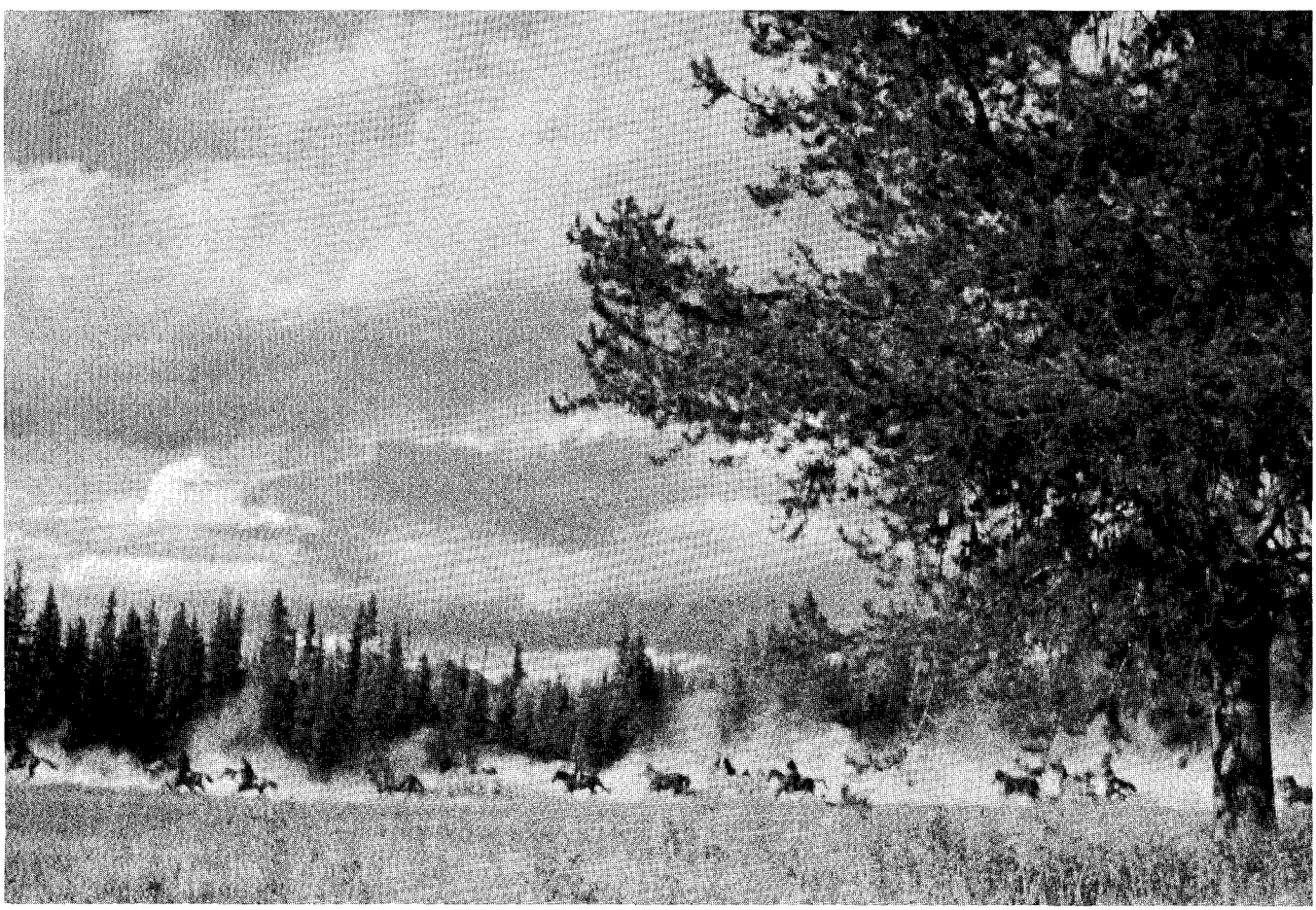
Outside the sky is fading, the river is brown and swollen. We pass for the last time fifty elk taking supper in a far off lush pasture. The juggler is asleep, her head on my shoulder. The mountain peaks turn through orange into gold.

Scene 78, Take 18: We are inside Heaven's Gate, roller rink, dance hall, meeting place for the immigrants. We are armed and angry. It is time to fight the mercenaries. Bunched together opposite us are the merchants, our own people, but they stand against us. They have much to lose in the coming confrontation and are not on the deathlist.

It is a long scene. The master take runs eleven minutes. Actors from both sides give pleading, tearful speeches. I hear a woman, an extra, sobbing. The outrage, the injustice, the hopelessness is too much for her frail emotion. Cimino rearranges, brings her into the picture. She cries for four days.

Late afternoon, a few from our side have dropped from the heat. They are taken out and doubled. The scene builds to a wild frenzy. We are screaming for blood! Never have I emoted such a quantity of anger both real and histrionic. Toward the middle of the take Nicolas breaks out from us. He rushes enraged at the merchants. Bridges stops him, calms him. We are packed close. Nicolas is pleading. For the eighteenth time his tattered worthless land deed slips from his trembling fingers. He slumps to his knees weeping.

A woman near me gnashes her teeth, groans, and keels



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over in a fit of epilepsy. The nurse and Cimino are at her side in seconds.

"That's a cut. We'll go again."

Scene 79, Takes 1-4: I step into the chalk outline of Bridges' shoes.

"The man who is Bridges, a little to your left, a little more. Good. Hold that."

Two cameras are breathing down my neck.

"Grillo, put your finger on the stove. Down, down, more, there. The bullet will enter there."

An Effects man with a pneumatic chisel steps to the tall cylindrical woodstove and at that fingered spot gouges a small loud hole. Another Effects man presses a capsule of powder into gray clay. He reaches up through the stove door and presses the clay against the hole's inner opening. The wired capsule protrudes, deceptively tiny, white, quiet. He covers the outer opening with a strip of black tape. With spray paint he 'knocks down' the tape to match the stove.

Koslo and Wulff, mayor and merchant, enter, wires visible at the backs of their collars. They take their positions, facing me, close, one directly behind the other; behind Wulff, the stove. The system of wires that trails down the actors' spines ends at a small black box.

Bridges claims his footprints. The immigrants return to Heaven's Gate, this time for off-camera audio. I take up a priceless position and hold fast against the eager crowd.

We have just united in the center of the floor. The merchants will fight on our side! We let up a cheer! Then a shot!

The side of Koslo's head explodes and splatters those near him with fake blood. The lobe of Wulff's ear is sliced off. The designated point on the stove reacts with a poof of fuller's earth.

I watch Koslo die four times. I am startled, awed, interested, nonchalant.

A chilly September. From the last row of seats on the schoolbus one of the two old men who always sit together demands more heat. The driver does not hear him, no one relays the message.

For the battle scenes we have endured—and not always gracefully—this dirt road's pitiless shakedown. Daily, in the dark before dawn, we suffer fifty miles of body punches. The abrupt sways are like slaps in the face. Brains slosh in their brain pans.

Two weeks of this and most are numb, resigned, adrift in a fuzzy, static preservative. Not the old man.

"More heat! More heat, dammit!"

The road worsens. Now we are in a dicebox. Jolted diaphragms force a chorus of unintelligible groans and expirations. Whoever is shaking us is desperate. He has all his money on chance. A few chips spill into the aisle.

The bus halts at the edge of a field. The jostling has left us speechless. Observing these two neat rows of bug-eyed catatonics, one might think that we just now miraculously returned from the most horrifying-of-all-time roller coaster ride.

A black cloud floats just above my crown. I rise, wrap my blanket around me like a cape, and make my way over outstretched legs to the front of the bus. Soft, indignant exclamations break the vacuum.

Another bus pulls in, now two sets of headlights il-

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luminate the catering wagons. Wranglers and stuntmen bunch near the coffee urns. Humpshouldered in a thin silver cloud of breath, they discuss the finer points of firearms, horses, and the assorted local talent.

I have my black coffee. It sloshes and burns my thumb. It's going to be a bad day. Last night the sweetest of all my lovers did not come home.

The battle begins again. We pile into wagonbeds. The teamsters kick up the two-horse teams and deliver us with a violent bump and crash out onto the battleplain. We scream for revenge! Angrily I flip the trap on my Springfield and shove home a brass cartridge.

The mercenaries draw into a huge wheel, each of fifty butchers at the outer tip of a spoke. We blast away, thirty wagons in two concentric circles in opposite spins. Load, fire, duck. Load, fire, duck. Load, fire, duck.

Nobody dies today. We save bloodletting and agony for close-ups. During the fourth take a collision of horse and wagon leaves a stuntwoman with a leg fracture. We pause, but only to preserve the purity of the soundtrack, as the helicopter takes her out.

Early morning, sixteenth day of battle, the cold air carries sharp odors on fine-drawn lines. Far off, in corrals still invisible, snorting and the jangle of harnesses. Wranglers with beer breath and no sleep ask each other, how much sleep you git? and laugh.

Inside the catering truck, beef is on slow bake. My nostrils flare. I turn, a quick twist at the neck and, like glass rods one up each nostril, two predominant fumes enter. The marriage startles, then they neutralize each other to tastelessness. The primal lure of cooked flesh. The sour affront of fresh steaming urine and manure.

Nineteenth day. Again thick ground fog. The sun rises, but it is the moon we pretend we are staring at.

A wrangler jokes with a girl who yesterday took a fall from her horse.

"Hey, little girl! How's your backside?"

"That mule didn't get *my* cherry. I been ironed before."

Mid-afternoon. The helicopter takes Valdemar. A wagon laid over at a gallop, rolling him as if he were a pencil under a massive block of wood. I feel better today despite his screams. Sweatbees revel in my fruit cocktail. At least I'm eating again.

The last day. A dynamite explosion takes me out. All in my wagon are killed. Sprawled on my back I let my arms extend out, crucified. My fingers relax, fold in, flower petals at sunset. One leg I've bent back under to give the impression of mangling.

Another long take. I can't see what's happening. Ten minutes and I am cramping badly, each heartbeat a surge of pain. I am dead. I can't move. I recite to myself the Lord's Prayer, the Gettysburg Address, and 'Hay for the Horses' by Gary Snyder.

"That's a cut! That's a wrap!"

It's over. I pull myself up, massage my knee, soothe my hipjoint with short back-and-forth rotations. I hear laughing. One of those who cried over the massive death and desolation is now laughing. □

DARA WIER

WHERE THERE WAS STILLNESS

Even stillness, where there was stillness
consisted of hundreds and hundreds of moments
of motion that kept their equilibrium.

—Rilke

Having seen cranes stand on cows' backs,
surprise did not come in seeing the weasel
with a mouse in its mouth standing stock
still in the cabin doorway. Not that

this was any balancing act, the weasel
had four feet and solid footing
on dryboards in the threshold.
The weasel was white, this was spring;

its glass eyes and ragged fur told me
something cold had stilled it.
I saw a slim copperhead wound around
the weasel's tail and wondered why this

was so contrived.
Because I am one to touch and touch again,
I stepped forward to put my finger first
on the weasel's brow, and so quietly did

the snake remove itself, I saw the hand
which holds the brace and bit turn counter-
clockwise to leave my changed heart
victim, victimized.

STEPHEN DUNN

THE INEXPRESSIBLE

I bring the inexpressible home with me
and listen to it hum
while we talk. You know all about it,
that knot between heart and speech
unreachable except by the odd
thrust, at the odd appropriate time.
I say "love," but mean
"This moment, already passing"
which no, I do not fully mean.
You say "love"
and the ancient translations begin.
Now the ambiguous caress,
the inexpressible once again touching you
like my shadow does before I do.
Now the getting down to it,
the extended arms, the greased pig.

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Sigmund Freud: The Once & Future Hero

Freud, Biologist of the Mind: Beyond the Psychoanalytic Legend, by Frank J. Sulloway. Basic Books. $20.

In his *The Riddle of the Universe*, Ernst Haeckel, citing the authority of the *Syndicon* of Pappus, provides what he plainly and maliciously intends to be a hilarious account of the behavior of the bishops at the Council of Nicaea in 325 A.D. There were said to be three hundred and eighteen bishops assembled and their task was to winnow from the list of forty writings that claimed to present authentic accounts of the life and teachings of Jesus those that were, in fact, the true and genuine article. Unfortunately the accounts were internally and intramurally contradictory. Some of them, as became clear only much later, were pious forgeries. Since the bishops could not agree on the canonical choices, someone eventually had the idea of placing all the books together under the altar, praying that the books of merely human origin might remain there and that the authentic texts might leap to "the table of the Lord." Tradition maintains that their piety was richly rewarded in the event. Divine fact and human fiction were miraculously separated.

Anyone who writes, or reads, a substantial book purporting to narrate the true and canonical history of Sigmund Freud and the development of psychoanalysis faces a similar problem. The disciples and the critics of Freud have come up with an embarrassment of biographical and historical riches. Freud himself has provided biographical reflections, some of those reflections functioning within the very documents that have created psychoanalysis. And certain associates of Freud have chosen to remain silent. Whether or not in a deliberate attempt to create a myth of Freudianism, Freud himself on two separate occasions shredded a goodly portion of his private papers that might have yielded reliable insights into the development of his thought. But, among Freudian disciples, one Pauline biographical contender stands head and shoulders above the crowd. This is the impressive three-volume intellectual biography of Ernest Jones, survivor of the original Committee whose members vowed to protect Freud and Freudianism from the distorting attacks of the nonpsychoanalytic world.

For all their admitted merits, the Jones volumes have never proven fully satisfactory to those who have more than a passing interest in Freudian psychoanalysis but who also, for one reason or another, stand outside the regular Freudian establishment. How, short of the kind of miracle alleged to have occurred at Nicaea, does the writer organizing his sources or the reader perusing the results of such organization, discern the canonical Freudian gospel?

Philip Rieff, whose *Freud: The Mind of the Moralist* (1959), remains one of the most perceptive and insightful accounts of Freudianism amongst an uncertain canon, is one who shares the outsider's suspicion of Jones. Stressing that what emerges from Jones' efforts is an interpretation, Rieff insists, in spite of the indispensable merits of this "inside" history, that "There is enough raw material . . . for a dozen Oedipal offspring." And Rieff concedes that Jones "will need correction."

Frank Sulloway's new book, *Freud, Biologist of the Mind: Beyond the Psychoanalytic Legend*, is the most ambitious attempt during the two decades since Rieff's prediction to supply a fully-documented corrective history. The major motif of Sulloway's study is its revisionist attack. Sulloway is convinced that the accounts given by insiders, Jones above all, are fatally flawed by a deliberate attempt (begun by Freud himself) to rewrite the biography of the founder of psychoanalysis and to finesse the character of his discoveries in order to satisfy systematic designs that fly in the face of the historical record.

The Freudian myth is a complex of a number of subordinate and contributory legends which are summarized and outlined by Sulloway at the end of the last chapter of his book. There are no fewer than twenty-two particular myths and four general myths catalogued and briefly synopsized, together with references keyed to Sulloway's own book and to the work of many others, both myth-makers and demythologizers. Short of a recapitulation in their entirety, the reviewer is driven to summarize a summary in order to suggest the flavor of the antitheses to Sulloway's revisionist theses.

The primary myth is the mystification which has enveloped the person of Sigmund Freud himself. Freud has been pictured as an heroic and isolated figure, misunderstood and rejected by his Viennese medical contemporaries. He has been portrayed as having laboriously brought the new science of psychoanalysis into being by his own single-handed genius, particularly through his famed self-analysis. Freud's emphasis on the solely sexual etiology of the neuroses has been described as shocking and horrifying to his conservative associates, on the assumption that psychiatric medicine before Freud was entirely ignorant of Freud's discovery that infantile behavior and fantasy is sexual rather than naïvely innocent. Freud's self-analysis, portions of which turn up in *The Interpretation of Dreams* and in later works, was the alleged fountainhead of the new insights. From that self-analysis, in particular, was derived—or so myth insists—the libidinal groundfloor of psychoanalytic theory. In spite of the heuristic use of biological analogies and various hydraulic metaphors, the faithful band insisted that Freud's was a "pure" psychology. They claimed that it was not really beholden to either of two possible forms of materialistic reduction—neither reduction to neurophysiological correlates nor reduction to the dynamic and evolutionary biological correlates that derive from the nineteenth century biology of Lamarck and Darwin. All of these are ahistorical falsehoods, according to the Sulloway revision of the in-house history of psychoanalysis.

Probably I should be careful to say that this is the

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author's major thrust. In the course of a long book that surveys the same territory more than once, there tends to be some alternation between more careful and qualified criticism of the myths as overemphases and distortions and outright rejection of the myths as completely baseless ideological inventions. Some of the perpetrators of myth are said to pay "lip service," for example, to the influence of biology on the Freudian formulations—but without really appreciating the deep relevance of biological models to the Freudian metapsychology. However, Sulloway feels that the mainline structure of the myth is clearly enough revealed when he finds someone like Erik Erikson, writing in the late '50s, holding that psychoanalysis ". . . had to all appearances, sprung from [Freud's] head like Athena from the head of Zeus." Or he becomes properly incensed when he finds Ernest Jones, in his chapter on biology and Freud, praising the founder for his "contributions to biology," rather than more truthfully recognizing the importance of Freud's borrowings *from* biology.

What are the facts? They are almost the precise opposites of the myths. Freud was not isolated from his contemporaries. Instead he and his work absorbed and then reflected the intellectual currents of the age, particularly its Darwinian ambiances and its now out-of-date Lamarckism. The inside account of Freud's relation to his first important collaborator, Josef Breuer, claims that it was Breuer's reluctance to go along with Freud's single-minded insistence on the sexual basis of hysteria and the purely psychic nature of hysterical defenses that drove the two close friends apart. Not so. It was primarily a matter of incompatible scientific styles and not any deep systematic disagreement (even though Freud in reconstructing the Breuer episode either deliberately misconstrued or unconsciously doctored the real history of their intellectual collaboration).

Freud's long and crucially important association with Dr. Wilhelm Fliess, the Berlin physician and biologist, has been similarly obscured by the mischief of the myth-makers. The myth, in order to legitimate Freud's originality, reduces Fliess' function merely to that of an audience for Freud's rapidly developing ideas in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The fact is that Fliess was centrally important in moving Freud away from his earlier quest for a neurophysiological basis for psychological functions and toward the evolutionary point of view that became an essential contribution to Freud's mature analysis of character and personality. It was Fliess' emphasis on the spontaneous development of infantile sexuality, for example, that ultimately rescued Freud from the cul-de-sac of the seduction theory of the occasioning of the neuroses. At the same time it was Fliess' evolutionary biology that provided Freud with the conception of the id as the source of phylogenetically determined instinctual energies.

In short, Sulloway finds that it was Fliess' example, above all, that transformed Freud and Freudianism into a "crypto-biologist" and a psychobiology, respectively. It was the dynamism of Fliess' Darwinism that inspired Freud to unearth the answer to the first of the "three great problems" that lay at the very heart of psychoanalysis.

The first problem was: Why sex? That is, what good reason can be provided for the *exclusively* sexual basis of the neuroses? The Freudian answer, given in terms not merely of purely psychical defense against early trauma, but through the concepts of latency, sublimation, fixation, and pathological regression, owes everything to the paradigm of biological recapitulation.

The second great problem was that of pathological repression. If neurotics do indeed suffer from "reminiscences," what is the mechanism that brings about this unconscious reinstatement of forgotten desires and aims? Freud's attempt to answer this question came to involve nothing less than a speculative reconstruction of the life experience of the early hominids as they pursued a long transition to human status, an experience that is recapitulated in the long period of dependency in the ontogeny of every little human barbarian who is brought kicking and screaming into civilized repression. The story of this transition from prehuman animal to man is so basic to Freudianism that it is worth a recounting here as exemplary of the deeply rooted biologism of the Freudian analysis.

Freud sees that man has evolved from a four-footed primate who eventually adopted an upright position. Before the shift to bipedalism, the dominant sense was the olfactory. Its contribution to sexual activity was of a periodic nature associated with the flow of the menses. When man began to move in an upright posture, smell was deposed as the dominant sense and vision occupied the vacated place. With the atrophy of the sense of smell, the formerly erotic stimuli of nose, mouth, and anus came to be perceived as loathsome and repellent. These old stimuli were repressed in the service of man's new uprightness. Along with the rise to prominence of the visual sense, sexual excitation, no longer pheromonal, began to be a constant excitability rather than periodic rutting. Thus the constancy of sexual need is the evolutionary foundation of the primal horde, bringing on the sons' parricide and guilty rejection of their own deed. The guilt of the murdering sons becomes the foundation of morality, ultimately the oedipal genesis of all civilized life.

The third great problem—Why this particular neurosis rather than some other?—is resolved by reference to the same biogenetic considerations. The regression towards and fixation upon a particular stage of individual psychosexual development is actually a reprise within the individual of the phylogenetic history of the hominid's vanished transition from prehuman to human. The child is oral, then anal, latently genital and, after a waiting period, fully genital—or he should be if all goes well. But it seldom does, and the result is that the progress toward non-neurotic adjustment is flawed by a return of the unsuccessfully repressed. Freud believed that we inherit as "organic" repression what was archaically experienced. And he believed furthermore that if the delicate balance between the internally programmed repressions and those externally imposed was not maintained, an atavism (the neurosis) developed around the unsuccessfully repressed point of fixation. So it is that a society valuing sexually-derived sublimations of instinct imposes the price of neurotic affliction in varying degrees and kinds upon all of its members.

It is in this vein that Sulloway pursues his basic insight that Freud was governed throughout most of his career by some form of evolutionary biology—particularly the law of biogenesis. That law, summarized in Haeckel's phrase as "Ontogeny recapitulates phylogeny," is seen to be the figured bass, as it were, against which the thematic varia-

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tions of psychoanalytic psychology are played out. The evolutionary solutions to the three great problems then come together in the late topographical theory eventually developed by Freud, the progress from id, to ego, to super-ego. In its terms, we see the child beginning as an id which encapsulates the stored-up and abbreviated phylogeny of the entire range of his extinct forbears, but especially his more recent hominid ancestors. The id's bestial and irrational psychic energies, untrammeled, would simply extinguish the life of the child. Therefore, under the influence of the external world, first and principally the family, the nascent adult is forced into a pattern of repressions that adapt him to the reality of his superiors. Preprogrammed for civilization's rigors by the archaic heritage of renunciation already described, the id's demands for pure gratification slowly defer to the blandishments of reality, yielding the beginnings of an ego—which is merely an outgrowth of the id, save for the fact that it, unlike the id, is largely conscious rather than unconscious. Again, because of the internal programming already pointed out, the child is "sexual" in the sense of libidinal from the beginning. He must inevitably choose his mother as his first love-object and just as inevitably find his need in conflict with the father's genital authority. The phylogenetically laid-out program of the onset of "latency," aided and abetted by the "organic" repression of incestuous desire, eventually results in the displacement of the mother imago upon an exogamous object-choice while the hostility toward the father is softened by identification. With good luck, the ego's compromising between pleasure and reality results in a bearable set of sublimated instinctual revisions. The patriarchal identification that eases the oedipal problem also leaves behind it a psychic residue in the form of a super-ego, which serves the useful function of transforming external repression into an internal sense of conscience. Thus the tripartite characteral topography describes a process of shaping a structure of adaptation from raw biological instincts into a set of hidden instinctual derivations that represent the civilized norm. Or, otherwise put, the developed person is comprised of a set of successful repressions taking the form of sublimations—instinctual successors that provide a compensatory gratification as substitutes for the objects of the original biological drives. If, however, the "organic" repressions already alluded to are stronger or weaker than they optimally should be at crucial stages of psychosexual evolution, the result is either neurosis or perversity.

While a summary like this one is absurdly abbreviated—the Freudian corpus lists twenty-four volumes and there are more in the hands of editors—it may suggest the deep biologism of the Freudian outlook. The most serious defect in the summary is that it entirely omits the multitude of ways in which the course of individual development can go awry. It omits entirely the variety of modes in which the combination of going backward in recapitulation and forward by adaptation to existent circumstances can get stuck, as if a phono stylus were caught in a repeating groove even while part of the music plays discordantly on. The neurotic suffers from unconscious recollections of the fixations to which he has regressed and which he repetitively but unsuccessfully seeks to allay with symptomatic expressions. The pervert's program of repression is similar but his unsuccessful repressions issue in the form of acting-out behavior rather than taking on a disguise in the form of a neurotic mask. Thus it is that Freud came to see the neuroses as the "negative" of the perversions.

Sulloway claims, and with considerable plausibility, that those orthodox Freudians who adhere to the "pure" psychology thesis have to ignore the biogenetic spine of the Freudian explanatory system as it appears in a synopsis like the one just sketched. They have to imagine that it was Freud's largely unaided self-analysis that turned up the ubiquity of infantile sexuality and its vicissitudes. They have to believe that clinical data derived from treatment of neurotic patients filled in the substance of the metapsychological structure first unveiled by the magic of Freud's genius. Finally, they have to believe that all this development took place without a theory-laden probing that forced the ambiguous evidence. Not likely.

While Sulloway holds the view that both the earlier and the later Freud is thoroughly psychobiological, he presents as a prime example of the force and relevance of the biological model the one aspect of Freud's late instinct theory that has occasioned the most derision and opposition, even from ordinarily staunch Freudians—the death instinct. While the development of Freud's theory of instincts is a complicated and not always clear groping for a proper accounting, still the main motif for Freud was always the retention of a bipolar thesis-antithesis of basic drives. He was deeply uncomfortable with any monistic instinct theory, always striving to posit the strife of instinct against instinct at the very groundfloor of his theory. In *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1920), the notion of a death instinct is presented almost apologetically as a far-out biological speculation. A decade later, in *Civilization and Its Discontents,* Freud's doubts and hesitations had vanished and he wondered how it was possible to think "in any other way." He now saw two basic instincts, an instinct of life or Eros and an instinct of death ranged against Eros. From the life-instinct comes the striving for ever greater unities and larger associations. From the death-instinct comes not just the inner negation of life. The aggressive energy derived from the death-instinct can sometimes be turned outward to serve the purposes of life—as in the conquest of scarcity. Moreover, Freud's attention was drawn to a class of clinical phenomena, the repetitive traumatic dreams of shell-shocked veterans of the first world war. These painful recurrences seemed to contradict or over-ride the pleasure principle. Fixated upon these traumas and locked in compulsive repetition, the maladies of these victims of war resembled the transference neuroses in which patients compulsively repeated obviously unpleasant events in their past. In the third place, prior to the institution of the death instinct, Freud had assumed that libidinal frustration was the cause of regression to earlier instinctual objects. But now it appeared that regression could involve not just previously abandoned instinctual object-choices but former instinctual aims as well. According to his previous theory, primal or "organic" repression, together with the spur of reaction-formation, ought to keep the organism moving forward and progressively because of a continual inhibition of regression. But the biogenetic law, mechanically requiring a repetition-cycle that impedes the abandonment of early aims and objects of the instincts, stands in contradiction to the frustration-regression model of the same phenomena. The solution to this dilemma, as Sulloway reads it, is to give up the all-encompassing pleasure prin-

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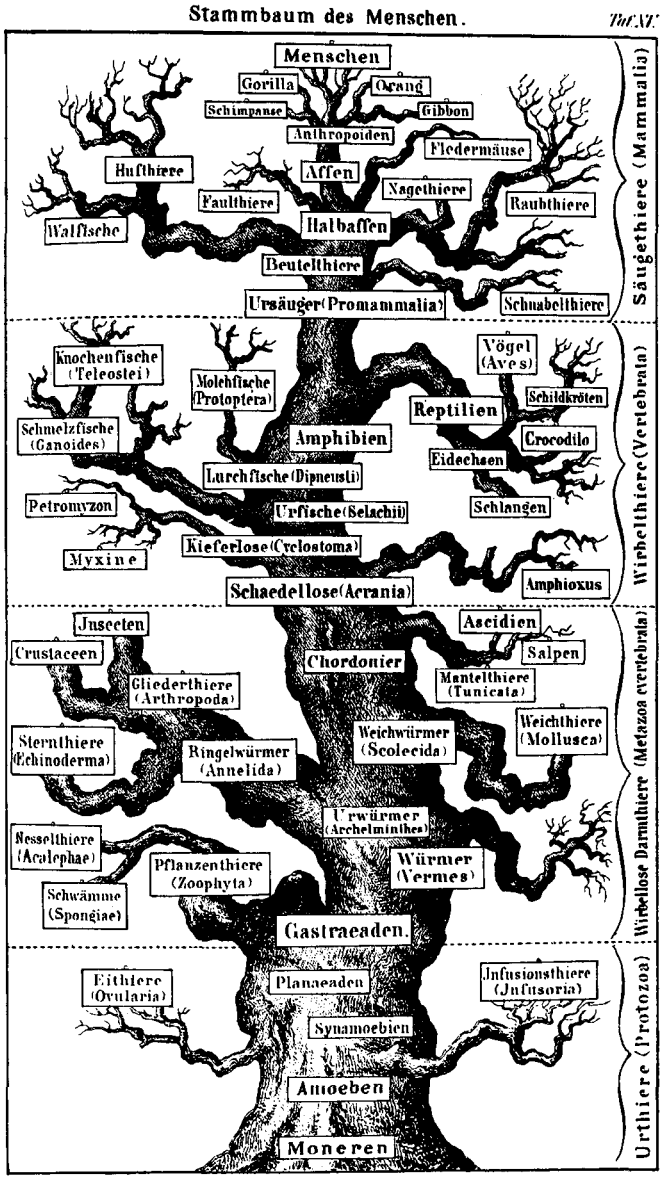
ciple. Following the biogenetic paradigm, the nature of instinct is redefined as conservation of the past, resulting in the postulate that "an instinct is an urge inherent in organic life to restore an earlier state of things." Then Freud (with Ferenczi's help) boldly solves the dilemma of the paradox between the forward-striving of the pleasure principle and the backward-looking death instinct merely by denying the reality of "progress." Going forward in life is just a roundabout way of putting off for a certain span of time the basic urge to return to beginnings—to die. Haeckel's "ontogeny recapitulates phylogeny" has been revised by Freud to read, oddly and radically, "Ontogeny is nothing but recapitulation."

Sulloway regards this theoretical incorporation of the death instinct into the body of Freudian metapsychology as the crowning achievement of his basic *aperçu* that the biogenetic law unifies Freudian theory as nothing else can. It is this achievement which decisively gives the lie to those who speculate that the so-called death instinct is merely a reflection of Freud's personal and subjective worries and fears on the subject of death. This chapter on the death instinct is, he exults, "the culmination of Freud's biogenetic romance." In this judgment, I think him correct. In fact, this chapter of *Freud, Biologist of the Mind* is the most distinguished contribution to this much-debated episode of late Freudian instinct theory to appear in print since *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* itself.

But it is now time to take stock of Sulloway's overall accomplishment in *Freud, Biologist of the Mind*. Has he succeeded in fulfilling the ambitious goals set for himself in this capacious book? In the "Preface and Guide to the Reader," he announces three wide-ranging objectives: First, "to bring both Freud and the history of psychoanalysis within the professional boundaries of the history of science"; second, "to mark a watershed in the history of Freud studies"; third, to provide "a social psychology of myth and legend." My judgment is that he has succeeded—in part. *Freud, Biologist of the Mind* does mark a watershed in Freud studies. And, just as some of the enthusiastic early comments on the book declare, it will be impossible for any serious student of Freud to ignore this truly significant accomplishment. That it is the product of an author who began his Freudian research at the age of twenty-five and concluded it after seven years of dogged and detailed study of the historical source materials is some kind of tribute not only to Frank Sulloway but also to the quality of education offered by the Harvard University history of science program.

Nonetheless it is a flawed masterpiece. The greatest value of the book, in this reviewer's opinion, is to be found in the enormous number of new facts uncovered by the bibliographical industry of the author. These vast and disparate sources are organized and deployed with remarkable skill and they have altered considerably my own understanding of the importance of Wilhelm Fliess to the development of psychoanalysis and of the significance of the distortions contributed by Ernest Jones, to identify two leading examples. The faults of the book lie elsewhere. They emerge in certain interpretations that Sulloway believes he can mine from his factual ore. They reside in certain presuppositions inherent in the professional identity he brings to the study of the history of Freudianism.



Haeckel's evolutionary tree. The first five stages (monera, amoeba, synamoeba, planaea, and gastrea) are reconstructed almost entirely from ontogeny of higher forms. (From Haeckel, 1874.)

Sulloway's ambition to transfer Freud studies into the domain of the history of science is an ambition that cannot be satisfied. The short reason is that Freud was not a scientist. Psychoanalysis is not a science. Psychoanalysis is a mixed bag of approaches that tend to unify themselves under the heading of *Geisteswissenschaft*. Perhaps the best translation of *Geisteswissenschaft* is simply "humanities." It certainly is true that Freud himself (and certain Freudians who savor this "Freud") can be selectively quoted to the effect that psychoanalysis is science and nothing but science. A convenient example of Freud's scientism is found in the passage from "The Question of a Weltanschauung," from the *New Introductory Lectures*. Denying that psychoanalysis has any special world-view of its own, Freud writes that "[psychoanalysis] must accept the scientific one." And a little further on he observes that "the intellect and mind are objects for scientific research in *exactly the same way as any non-human things*" (emphasis mine). Here I think that Freud misunderstands himself and that *Freud, Biologist of the Mind* continues the Freudian self-misunderstanding. Psychoanalysis is a science-influenced analytical approach to the study of the struc-

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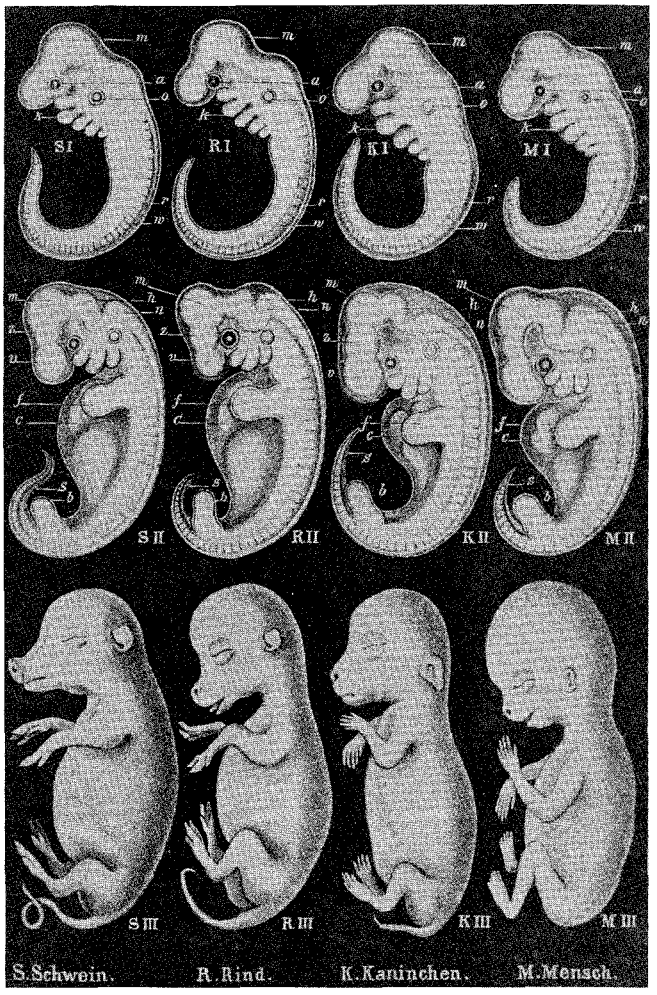
tures of mind and behavior that falls somewhere between the two stools of the science of biology and the science of psychology and then expands itself inevitably into the domain of civilization and culture and, at last, even to philosophical cosmology. Its major categories, derivative from the decoding of human speech and human interaction, cannot be recovered in a reduction to the categories of Galilean-Newtonian natural science. It is true enough that Freud's early sympathies were Helmholtzian as well as Darwinian and that the influence of both, and of Brücke's laboratory, never were absent from Freud's search for the foundations of psychoanalysis. But it is also true that the interpretive reading of a text, be it a dream-narrative or the speech of the analytic session, was even more central in the clinical data which comprises the very stuff of psychoanalytic theory-formation. Freud, as he grew older, was less and less inclined to view psychoanalysis as a therapy, more and more inclined to see it as the major component in a historical analysis of the meaning of human life and human civilization. In these respects, his work fits quite naturally with the post-Kantian philosophers of history, especially Wilhelm Dilthey, an older contemporary of Freud who died in 1911. The parallel with Dilthey runs deep. As Dilthey set aside psychology of the "natural science" kind in favor of a non-laboratory science of human nature that would assist in charting the victory of spirit over matter in all the departments of culture, so Freud more and more saw psychoanalysis as a "crypto-philosophy," not merely as a "crypto-biology." The late Freud presents a system of the humanities that bridges the two cultures of C.P. Snow in a radically new kind of psycho-philosophy or psycho-cosmology. This new and unnamed "anthroposophy" was at once "scientific," in the sense of *Geisteswissenschaft,* and "philosophical," in a fashion that parallels, while showing some departures from, German post-Kantian philosophy of spirit. Thus the Freudian homily, "Where id was let ego be," becomes in *The Future of an Illusion* a faint hope of a utopia of rationality and an echo of the philosophical hopes for the self-realization of Universal Mind.

Whatever the merits of this brief suggestion of the non-scientific character of the Freudian invention, I think it at least illustrates the legitimate variety of Freudian interpretations and that the variety carries, on its face, some warrant to explicate certain of the aspects of the Freudian bouquet of disciplines better than does some single master paradigm, in this case that of scientific biology.

That psychoanalysis is a natural science is a Freudian myth. It is also a Sullowayan myth. One of the chief reasons for Freud's self-misunderstanding of psychoanalysis, for his need to deny that psychoanalysis was other than scientific, was defense. He had a tendency toward speculation and toward the human "sciences," as distinct from the natural sciences, from the very beginning. And it must have seemed to him that only by stressing the side of natural science could he do the work he had laid out for himself in devising a therapy-based theory. Too much speculation, too soon, would have divorced him from the consulting-room too early in his career. In this respect, Freud's later work is a kind of regression in the service of an old man's persistent ego. It is in this context that one must understand Freud's confession in a letter to Fliess: "I see that you are using the circuitous route of medicine to attain your first ideal, the physiological understanding of man, while I secretly nurse the hope of arriving by the same route at my own original objective, philosophy."



Ernst Haeckel's illustration of the biogenetic law. Left to right: embryos of the pig, cow, rabbit, and human as they recapitulate their common ancestry. In accordance with recapitulation theory, the embryos show greatest similarity in the earliest stages of their development. (From Haeckel 1877: Plate 7.)

Freud was always ambivalently stretched between a "strict" physicalistic reduction of psychic phenomena to non-psychic equivalents (as illustrated in the "Project for a Scientific Psychology") and, at a seemingly distant remove, to the grand cosmic themes that began to develop in *Totem and Taboo.* These buried themes emerge in fullest force in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle, Civilization and Its Discontents,* and *Moses and Monotheism.* Lamarckian biology was a kind of compromise formation that bridged the earlier more therapeutic Freud and the later more philosophical Freud.

What I suggest, then, is that psychoanalysis is a unique interdisciplinary structure that includes—while yet transcending—biology, psychology, chemistry and physics, history and sociology, and religion. The suggestive richness and eclectic character of psychoanalysis is consistent with its being at once reductionistic and non-reductionistic in its outlook. When speaking in economic terms of the displacements and reassignments of "psychic energy," it gives the impression of using the crassest kind of mentalistic physics. At yet a different moment, psychoanalysis gives off the aura of an esoteric Eastern philos-

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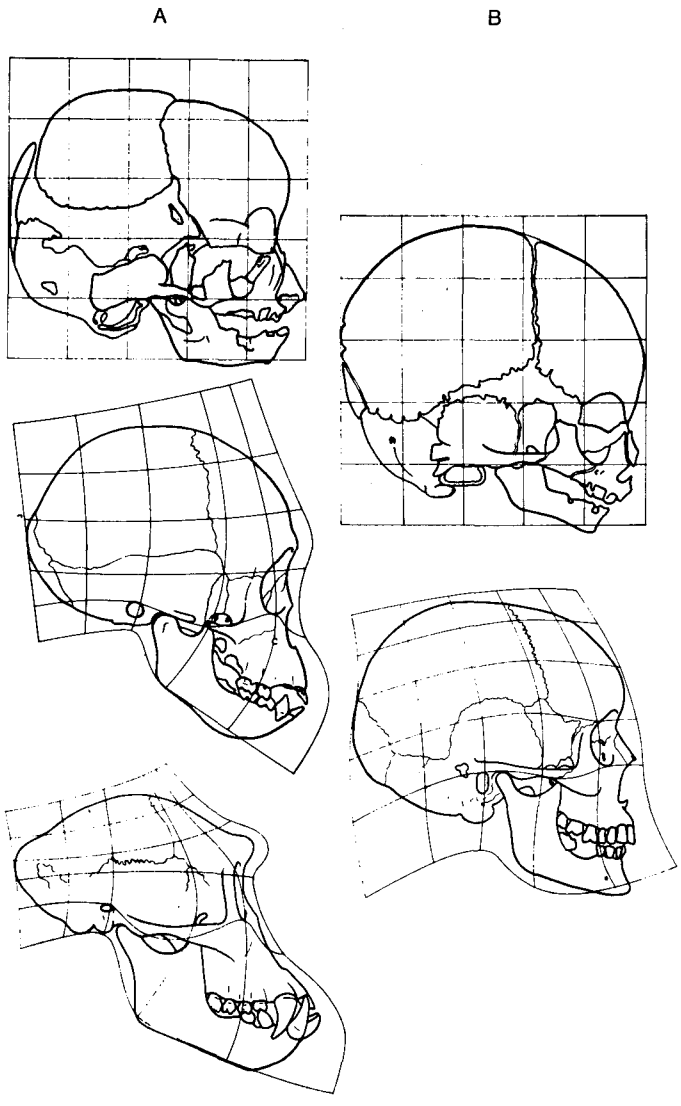
ophy when it traces the tendency of all life back to the eternal quiet of the non-organic world.

When Sulloway remarks that Freud "transformed" what he borrowed from others, he was recognizing what I have here in mind, although I have no doubt that he would reject my conclusions as remythologization—which in fact they are! I believe that Freud did both affirm and deny that psychoanalysis was scientific and other than scientific. I believe he did both affirm and deny that he was interested in questions of scientific priority. I also believe that he was very probably being consciously honest in both the affirmations and the denials. From the illuminating evidence that Sulloway digs up, I think it probable that Freud did unconsciously borrow some of the materials on infantile sexuality from Moll, Fliess, and other sexologists. But I suspect that he also honestly reported that he had the priority in this matter.

These apparent contradictions bring me to consider the third major ambition that Sulloway reveals in the "Preface and Guide to the Reader," the provision of a "social psychology of myth and legend." In the short Epilogue to *Freud, Biologist of the Mind*, there is included a two-page final section titled "The Indelible Nature of Myth." Here Sulloway reflects systematically on the preceding five hundred pages of evidence against the notion of Freudian psychoanalysis as a "pure" psychology and in favor of its comprising a "crypto-biology." Although he believes that the history of all the sciences is narrated by founders and disciples as myth whose purpose it is to control the future by dogmatizing the paradigmatic status achieved by a heroic pioneer, he does suggest that psychoanalysis is "perhaps unique among the sciences in having sought so strenuously to shroud its origins in myth." However, he appears to award the trophy to the myth-makers as he remarks that "Good historical myths are far more exciting . . . and more readily remembered than *the real thing*" (emphasis mine). Again, "Mankind . . . will not tolerate the critical assaults upon its heroes . . . that *mythless history* requires" (emphasis mine).

Where in the world is this "mythless history" to be found? And of what could it possibly consist? From Sulloway's text, I can only conclude that it is to be discovered and rendered substantial by that bringing of psychoanalysis within the professional purview of the history of science already discussed. How does one break through the surface plausibility of a myth into mythless history? One provides, through the diligent documentary research that is the mark of excellence in *Freud, Biologist of the Mind*, a factual refutation. One replaces the deliberately-perpetrated myth with true history, shorn of its mythical encumbrances. The revised version then stands in the place of the subjective and distorted account earlier supplied by the guardians of the ideological cult. Science fiction has been usurped by science fact.



Human neoteny displayed on transformed coordinates. (A) *Growth of a chimpanzee.* (B) *Growth of a human skull. The beginning fetal skulls are very similar. The direction of transformation is the same (negative allometry of cranium, positive allometry of face and jaws). But the adult human skull departs far less from the common juvenile form than does the adult chimpanzee. (From Starck and Kummer, 1962.)*

Well, not quite. Sulloway believes that this is what should happen. He believes that this is what would happen—if only the consumers of myth were more rationally-oriented people, more inclined than they are in fact to make historical judgments based on the weight of empirical evidence and upon the probabilities of development supported by that same evidence. Sulloway's urbane discomfort with this situation reminds me ineluctably of a similar position taken by the skeptical David Hume in his "Essay on Miracles." Hume has little trouble in demolishing the probability of the occurrence of miracles by invoking the ordinary principles of probability. The result is that the probability of a reported miracle having actually occurred is reduced to a point just short of zero. That ought to be enough for a reasonable man. But men are, sad to say, unreasonable. Hume's psychological explanation of the root of the irrationality of the miracle-hungry majority is so close to Sulloway's pejorative characterization of a myth-hungry public that I cannot resist the temptation to reproduce a sample of the Humean vitriol:

> With what greediness are the miraculous accounts of travelers received; their descriptions of land and sea monsters, their relations of wonderful adventures, strange men, and uncouth manners? But if the spirit of religion join itself to the love of wonder, there is an end of common sense; and human testimony, in these circumstances, loses all pretensions to authority. A religionist may be an enthusiast, and imagine he sees

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RECOMMENDED FURTHER READING ON FREUD AND PSYCHOANALYSIS

Bergasse 19 (Sigmund Freud's Home and Offices, Vienna 1938), by Edmund Engelman, with photographs by Edmund Engelman, captions by Rita Ransohoff, and an introduction by Peter Gay (Basic Books, Inc., 1976). Just before Freud, under pressure from the Nazis, was forced to flee Vienna to a refuge in England, Edmund Engelman was able to document the appearance of Freud's apartments and offices in the Vienna building where Freud had lived and worked for almost fifty years. The book is beautifully produced and the marvelously clear photographs are not to be missed by any Freud buff. (Today the site is the location of a museum maintained by the Sigmund Freud Gesellschaft.) The introductory essay by Peter Gay is a gracefully-written sketch of Freud and Freudianism as well as presenting a prime example of what Frank Sulloway regards as the misleading emphases of the "Freudian myth."

The Origins of Psycho-Analysis (Letters to Wilhelm Fliess, Drafts and Notes: 1887-1902), by Sigmund Freud, edited by Marie Bonaparte, Anna Freud, and Ernest Kris (Basic Books, Inc., 1954). Rescued from a Berlin bookseller to whom they had come from the Fliess estate, these letters and essays sent to Dr. Wilhelm Fliess by Freud over the period of their intimate friendship and close collaboration are among the most fascinating and revealing documents of the psychoanalytic movement. Freud's 1895 attempt to achieve a reduction of psychoanalytic categories to a neurophysiological basis, given the title "Project for a Scientific Psychology," is included. Ernest Kris' introduction is a primary source of the Freudian "myth" against which Frank Sulloway's revisionism is poised.

Knowledge and Human Interests, by Jürgen Habermas, translated by Jeremy J. Shapiro (Beacon Press, 1971; German text, 1968). While this book is devoted to reflection upon and analysis of the whole modern period since Hegel, the chapter entitled "The Scientistic Self-Misunderstanding of Metapsychology: On the Logic of General Interpretation" gives us a reading of Freud that sees him as an "interpreter of texts," a hermeneutician, rather than a natural scientist. This approach, along the same lines as the Ricoeur book mentioned below, should be compared with Frank Sulloway's version of Freud as "crypto-biologist."

Repression (Basic and surplus repression in psychoanalytic theory: Freud, Reich, and Marcuse), by Gad Horowitz (University of Toronto Press, 1977). While the subtitle of *Repression* indicates that the Freudian revisionists, Reich and Marcuse, are treated as well as Freud, it is fair to say that the central emphasis of the book is on a careful re-reading and re-estimate of the entirety of Freudian theory—from its basis in the instincts to the theory of civilization. Horowitz finds that Reich is finally too romantic and that Marcuse has erred in his analysis of Freud on several vital points, particularly in the handling of the distinction between basic and surplus repression. I have not seen a better book on the structure of the Freudian system, in spite of the density of its prose.

The Life and Work of Sigmund Freud, by Ernest Jones, 3 vols. (Basic Books, Inc., 1953-1957). Jones' enormous and engaging biographical and intellectual study of Freud is impressive not only for its thoroughness and, all things considered, its definitiveness, but also for its generally attractive prose style. Any reader of *Freud, Biologist of the Mind,* having committed himself to six hundred pages of reading about Freud and Freudianism owes it to himself to read about fourteen hundred more pages in order to take the measure of the "mythical" Freud that Frank Sulloway undertakes to restore to the realm of sober factuality. There is a paperback edition in one volume, edited and abridged by Lionel Trilling and Steven Marcus. I recommend reading the original, since most of Jones' theoretical and methodological commentaries have been sacrificed in the shortened version.

"*Methodological Issues in Psychoanalytic Theory,*" by Ernest Nagel, in *Psychoanalysis, Scientific Method, and Philosophy,* ed. Sidney Hook (New York University Press, 1959), pp. 38-55. Nagel's essay is the *locus classicus* for the position that denies to psychoanalysis any reasonable claim to the status of a natural science. Nagel, for example, finds psychoanalytic theory so fuzzy and ambiguous that it simply cannot be established whether some portion of it is or is not either verifiable or disverifiable. With respect, therefore, to claims of scientific validity made for psychoanalysis by some psychoanalysts, Nagel concludes: "Not proven."

Freud and Philosophy (An Essay in Interpretation), by Paul Ricoeur, translated by Denis Savage (Yale University Press, 1970). This impressive work which derives from the author's Terry Lectures at Yale University is divided into three sections. The first, "Problematic," develops a theory of symbol and interpretation. The second, "A Reading of Freud," puts the theory to work in organizing a close re-reading of the Freudian texts. The third section draws on what has gone before to make possible a hermeneutical and dialectical interpretation of Freudianism that opens up a new and compelling way of understanding psychoanalysis. While Ricoeur accepts Ernest Nagel's argument that Freudianism utterly fails to exhibit the elementary requirements for a scientific theory, he is able to go on to demonstrate that "reflective philosophy" can recover from the "Freudian myth" a great number of valuable cultural insights.

Freud: The Mind of the Moralist, by Philip Rieff (Anchor Books/Doubleday and Co., Inc., 1961). Rieff's book, still the most distinguished American study of Freud, first appeared in 1959 and is only slightly revised in the paperback version. The author, Benjamin Franklin Professor of Sociology at the University of Pennsylvania, develops his account in the context of Freud's place in the history of ideas as a "late Romantic." While he finds details to criticize in Freud's theoretical structure, he remains true to the original bent of Freudian orthodoxy rather than being attracted to the Freudian epigones. Rieff sees Freud as the authentic prophet of the quintessential type of modern man to which he gives the title, "psychological man."

"*The Legend of Freud,*" by Paul Roazen, *The Virginia Quarterly Review,* Winter, 1971, pp. 33-45. Though necessarily lacking the massive documentation of *Freud, Biologist of the Mind,* this brief essay captures most of the essentials of Frank Sulloway's thesis that the Freud of mythology is at a considerable remove from the Freud of reality. Though Roazen does not find that the myth is primarily generated as the result of suppression of the "crypto-biological" Freud, he is, no less than Sulloway, a skeptic with respect to the "purely psychological" Freud. In contrast to *Freud, Biologist of the Mind's* claim that the myth is more viable than the truth, Roazen claims that ". . . to mythologize Freud as a man in full control of his emotions is to deprive us of the opportunity of identifying with him as a fighting innovator."

—T.H.T.

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> what has no reality: he may know his narrative to be false, and yet persevere in it, with the best intentions in the world, for the sake of promoting so holy a cause; or even where this delusion has no place, vanity, excited by so strong a temptation, operates on him more powerfully than on the rest of mankind in any other circumstances; and self-interest with equal force. His auditors may not have, and commonly have not, sufficient judgment to canvass his evidence; what judgment they have, they renounce by principle, in these sublime and mysterious subjects: or if they were ever so willing to employ it, passion and a heated imagination disturb the regularity of its operations. Their incredulity increases his impudence: and his impudence overpowers their credulity.

If, in Hume's anathematizing of the credulous populace egged on by a miracle-monger we substitute "myth" for "miracle," if in place of "religionist" we substitute "the non-biological 'pure' Freudians," we have, I believe, an apt summary of Sulloway's demythologizing project and of his resigned prediction that myth will undeservedly triumph.

Historical truth does not lend itself so readily to a reasonable division of the true and the false, the mythless and the mythical. Neither Hume's nor Sulloway's rational empiricism is adequate to handle the narratives of human biography intertwined with the history of ideas. There is no "mythless" history and there is no set of historical facts, cleansed and purified of their mythical encrustations, sufficient decisively to break the power of mythical reconstruction. The story of Freud and psychoanalysis told by the Freudians of the established orthodoxy must necessarily represent a portion of the inconsistently real historical truth, if honestly told. The story will be, and it is, one-sided, partial, subjectively distorted and, with unconscious intent, incompatible with other established and objective "facts." But those narratives are not just improbable fictions. They are personal narratives of discovery that resulted in a change of outlook. Psychoanalysis, above all, including the personal insights of its founder, is a probe that rearranges the previous "facts" in a new and revealing order. Freud's self-analysis, with all its mythical overtones, is just such an event. The suppressed facts that Sulloway brings to light are not substitutes for the revelation of Freud's discovery of psychoanalysis as it transpired in his life-world. Nor is Freud's myth of a magical self-analysis a substitute for the suppressed facts that mark it a one-sided version of history. To my mind, what has happened is that the myth of Freudian utter originality is deservedly broken—while yet retained—in a form that is supplemented, not replaced, by the competing account of documentary influences. The result of these corrections and readjustments is by no means the installation of a "mythless history," if we should mean by that the extinction of the honestly described life-world of the inner circle of the Freudian cultus. Nor can it result in the elevation of the revisionist account to a position of single eminence.

The error of supposing that a revisionist history like that of Sulloway's book banishes myth lies in a faulty understanding of what it is to be a myth. Psychoanalytic "myth"—save perhaps in some limiting case of outright flim-flam promulgated by a pathological liar selling snake-oil—describes the self-understanding of a great man faced with awesomely difficult problems who works them through to a systematic explanation. A devoted disciple like Ernest Jones may—and did—take on the task of filling out and expanding the canonical gospel in the light of his intimate association with the master. Such an account will be mythical, inevitably. It will need to be corrected and revised. But it cannot be dispensed with since it, and its revisions, are part of the reconstruction of a history that may always progress but which never gets concluded. While further clarification and still further revisions, and revisions of revisions, are always possible and desirable, the myths will never yield to the "objective" facts.

The reason for this unyielding nature of the miraculous and the mythical is not what Hume and Sulloway believe it to be. It is not the popular appetite for the weird, wonderful, and improbable that accounts for the tenacity of the myth. It could even be argued that there is in this sophisticated age an opposed appetite for debunking criticism of myths of personal stature. No, the reason is that the historical fact is peculiarly two-sided. It is partly a product of human agencies interacting with each other and partly a product of external circumstance such that neither the one side nor the other can be excluded from the reconstruction of reality without falsification by incompleteness. Mythless history is a myth.

One myth of precisely this sort is the nineteenth century philosophy of history advanced by Leopold von Ranke, *wie es eigentliche gewesen ist*, to "show how it actually happened." A form of this myth has invaded Sulloway's study of Freud. While Sulloway does not claim to have recovered all the facts, he does, nevertheless, claim to have recovered a sufficiently good sample of the associated empirical context radically to refute the Freudian self-understanding of Freud and certain Freudians and to reveal their history as fictitious and his truthful. But such history, as Charles Beard pointed out some time ago, sets an impossible standard. The whole truth of the past cannot be reconstituted in the present. All that is available are interpretations and revised interpretations. Events are seen through various, necessarily incompatible self-understandings that may then be reinterpreted until, at last, interest in the reconstruction may wane. The messy loose-ends of historical conundrum and obscurity are still there but interest peters out and the controversy gets buried and forgotten. Such a lapse of historical memory can be revivified; a famous case in point is the Dead Sea Scrolls and the recent recovery of the Gnostic manuscripts from Nag Hammadi. If I am correct, instead of *Freud, Biologist of the Mind* relating to the controverted portions of Jones' *The Life and Work of Sigmund Freud* as fact to fiction, as objective history to mythical subjectivity, the actual relation is between two, somewhat divergent and competing but, generally, supplementary and complementary alternative interpretations. These alternative interpretations might, theoretically at least, be brought together into a single account that is more inclusive, in that sense "truer," than either standing alone. Such a joint or merged history of psychoanalysis, if it existed, would be superior either to Jones' or Sulloway's versions standing in competition.

Of course it may be that the author of *Freud, Biologist of the Mind* is not so easy to trap. He says so many things about Freud and the influences upon him that one cannot be sure of doing him complete justice, short of an essay that approaches the size of the original book. In the last paragraph of the Epilogue, in the form of a parting shot after an extended colloquy between author and reader, he

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concedes, "After all, Freud really was a hero." I was stunned. After giving thought to the matter, I am still unable to place that statement in proper relation to what I have earlier taken to be the main thrust of this book. Again, in his chapter on "The Myth of the Hero," I vaguely remembered and then turned back to locate another out-of-character proposition. Here it is: "Above all, we must also appreciate that what appears to us as myth today was generally an incontestable form of 'psychological reality' to Jones and the movement." I am stumped again. Is the myth a part or is it not a part of the legitimate history of the psychoanalytic movement? Or is "psychological reality" not real reality? Is it somehow something that really occurs but is insufficiently objective to be ontologically respectable? Was "what appears to us as myth today" something else yesterday? And will it alter its complexion again tomorrow? In the face of such uncertainties, I can only record here my firm impression that the motif that dominates Sulloway's text is not the recognition of myth, broken and still viable, but the rejection of myth as mere counterfactual fiction. It is this interpretation that I contest.

Like the quest for the historical Jesus, the quest for the historical Freud will never terminate in a clear-cut victory of fact over mythology. In any study that meshes into human biography—and intellectual history is such a study—the fact will be partly constituted by myths that no critical leech can bleed away. Like the denominational splits and theological differences that may eventually give way to ecumenical understanding, one can hope that similar divisions between interpreters of Freud's life and work will show progress toward agreement and mutual aid.

I certainly do not want to leave the impression in the course of criticizing Sulloway's somewhat flat-footed conception of mythology that I think one myth is as good as another. The "great man" theory of history, which has considerable resonance with the myth of "pure" psychoanalysis, always errs on the side of attributing too much to the unexampled inspiration of a transcendent genius—whether Jesus or Freud. After all, Jesus was immersed in the rabbinical tradition. On the other hand, the "cunning of historical reason" theory which reads the hero merely as the resultant of the massed forces of the *Zeitgeist* errs in the opposite direction. Historical truth, whatever may be the preference within "the professional confines of the history of science," must somehow embrace the myth. It must also incorporate ongoing criticism of the myth. And, in the end, we human beings must learn to tolerate the ambiguities that remain.

Freud really was a hero. —*Thomas H. Thompson*

Kosinski and His Critics

It is now fifteen years since the American novelist Jerzy Kosinski published his first major novel, *The Painted Bird*. In the intervening years, he has added immeasurably to the promise of that first book. To date, he has now published six additional novels: *Steps*, *Being There*, *The Devil Tree*, *Cockpit*, *Blind Date*, and most recently *Passion Play*. These works have been translated into over thirty-six foreign languages and in their various editions millions of copies have been sold around the world. Yet, amid that small band of serious American novelists, Kosinski remains a figure about whom critics and readers alike have expressed an ambiguous critical response, a reaction of mixed praise and distrust for his power and vision as a commanding voice in contemporary fiction.

As with many first novels, *The Painted Bird* was only sporadically reviewed in the American press, although its publication was given notice in major places, such as the *New York Times Book Review* and the *Saturday Review*. The novel was praised for its "unusual power and haunting quality," a work "highly convincing" and a study of inhuman experience "elegant in its negative definition of humanity." Almost unanimously, Kosinski was recognized as "a brilliant writer," an author who "only slowly confronts the reader with the full dimensions of evil." Many reviewers noted the brutal action and grammar of violence which informed the work, but no critic suggested that this turbulent atmosphere was in excess of the historical context. Shortly after its publication, Kosinski was awarded France's highest literary honor for a foreign work, the *Prix du Meilleur Livre Etranger*. In addition, he received the National Institute of Arts and Letters' Award in Literature.

Aside from the literary acclaim which circled around *The Painted Bird*, the novel posed two other problems, one of which created a genuine difficulty for the critics, the other creating a storm of protest for the author and his work. In the confusion of determining the definitive manuscript, Houghton Mifflin and Co., the publishers of the first edition, made a number of apparently unauthorized deletions; and, more seriously, they appended an ending to the journey of the boy not intended by the author. Thus, unwittingly, critics were judging a version of the novel which was at some remove from the authorial intent. Subsequent editions of *The Painted Bird* have restored the abridged passages and have deleted the erroneous conclusion of the first edition.

The first edition also identified the setting of the boy's story as Poland, Kosinski's native homeland. It is true that in subsequent editions all references to Poland are removed and the locale is identified as Eastern Europe, but *The Painted Bird* became part of an international controversy, with highly emotional and ill-founded charges being leveled at the book and the intent of its author. The novel was viewed by many writers in the Polish press as part of a concerted campaign to slander the good name of Poland in the West. In the hands of Communist Party-inspired and Party-funded newspapers, *The Painted Bird* became a politically subversive document calculated to inspire hatred for the Polish nation. In this context, abuse and rage threatened totally to obscure the book as an imaginative and fictional experience. The novel was conceived as a propaganda tool.

In his second novel, *Steps*, Kosinski both consolidated and extended his unique capacity to write a chilling and tensely dramatic story. Again, critics were generous in their

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praise for its compelling "cold and lucid" prose, but they differed widely on the meaning of the book. Irving Howe was "critical of the immorality of the spectator whose detachment is from the other side of the moon." Geoffrey Wolff praised Kosinski's talent but questioned its use: he found the book "immoral," a fragile barrier between psychosis and art. Kosinski's "experiment" is clearly a part of the continuing aesthetic problem which confronts every serious artist, the problem of fashioning a vehicle adequate to his vision. The absolute nature of that vision is not without paradox and ambiguity; the literary intentions in *Steps* cannot be divined solely from the book itself. In presenting the National Book Award for 1969 to Kosinski, Irving Howe said "The distinction of this book is that it deals with disorder through a literary structure that is fiercely ordered, the indiscipline of modern experience through the craft of serious discipline."

In spite of the National Book Award, Kosinski's critics were clearly not unanimous in their critical judgment of *Steps*. For a number of critics, *Steps* remained an elliptical moral puzzle in which the author refused to cast judgments. Like James Joyce, Kosinski seemed to be practicing an art of silence and cunning in which the reader is entrapped in a complicity of darkness. Kosinski's own attitude might be inferred from the fact that for a time his National Book Award Certificate graced the shadowed wall of the guest bathroom in his apartment; it now reposes unobtrusively on the east wall of his study, lost amid many photographs of horses.

The waywardness of critical praise and blame has been illustrated more recently by what might be called the Kosinski Hoax. In a strange test of wits, a young writer from Los Angeles submitted a freshly typed manuscript of *Steps* to every major American publisher, including the original publishing house of *Steps*. Without a glimmer of recognition, the novel was unanimously rejected. Kosinski was philosophical about the latter-day rejection of his award-winning experimental novel. "Thank god," he said, "it means different things to different people."

* * *

With the recent release of the movie version of *Being There*, Kosinski's fable on the invisible treachery of television has been revived as an extended joke on the communications industry. In various personal appearances on "Today" and the "Tonight Show," Kosinski himself seems in danger of re-interpreting his own novel. The movie, "Being There" he said, is about people who want to see reality on their own terms. Like the innocent flower-children of the Sixties, some people believe they can re-fashion an unpleasant reality if they decline to accept its presence. Like Tarden in *Cockpit*, they can keep changing the channels until the right program appears on the screen. Kosinski called the movie "a really very sweet movie."

When *Being There* first appeared in 1971—three years after the artistic success of *Steps*—some reviewers and critics expressed dismay about an alleged "thinness of vision" in the work. It seemed to a few critics that this novel failed to deepen or extend the impressive promise of Kosinski's earlier fiction. In the *New York Times*, Anatole Broyard blasted the novel: "Banality dressed as profundity." And John Updike, in *The New Yorker*, gave the novel only a cursory consideration: "Unlike Kosinski's other novels, *Being There* is not painful to read, which in his special case is not a virtue." Aside from the reservations of a few prominent critics, and inordinate damnation from the *New York Times*, *Being There* acquired a critical and popular acceptance as an exposé of the styrofoam composition of our society. At one point, Bantam Books was forced to stop releasing five-volume sets of Kosinski's novels because the copies of *Being There* were being consistently stolen from the sets. In the many re-issues through which this novel has now passed, it remains one of the most widely translated and sold works of Kosinski's fiction.

* * *

During the Seventies, Kosinski published four novels: *The Devil Tree*, *Cockpit*, *Blind Date*, and *Passion Play*, each novel a continuing and expanding meditation on his basic vision of the individual's struggle to secure liberty for the self in a world constantly imposing its collective stamp upon its members. Of this group, the two novels which chiefly alienated his critical support were *The Devil Tree* (1973) and *Cockpit* (1975). These novels seemed to consolidate the notion that Kosinski's fiction was a violent and brutal exploration of a dark reality, unrelieved by an affirming humanistic hope of man's control of a world indifferent to his imagination and dreams. Variously, Kosinski's fictive world was compared to the dark irrationality of Kafka, to the surface realities of Robbe-Grillet, to the existential absurdity and convoluted negativity of Céline. In the bumper-sticker prose of the *Village Voice*, Kosinski was labeled an "existential cowboy" whose characters survive solely by their wits in a terrain where "neurosis meets the frontier." Such labelling is a critical putdown, a refusal to explore the depth of Kosinski's creative vision. About such critical labeling, Kosinski is defensive:

> To me, a serious novelist's task has always been to take society to task: he is no more answerable to his critics than to his publishers, family, lovers, or neighbors—he is answerable to the plausibility of his vision, to his construction of dramatic imaginative reality that intensifies readers' awareness and confronts the very areas steadily deadened by the popular culture, which, in its essence, is fundamentally hostile to man's real aspirations, fears, and joys . . . . imaginative literature not only dramatizes life; above all, it enhances man's ability to perceive his own condition for what it is: a drama of which he is the protagonist, but a drama of particular, clearly delineated moments.

On a different front, Kosinski has been rigorously true to his own developing vision and to his unique dramatization of that vision. With the publication of *Steps*, many critics were ready to align him with a form of new innovative fiction and his work was frequently discussed along with that of such writers as William Gass, Thomas Pynchon, Donald Barthelme, and John Barth. Novels subsequent to *Steps* simply do not affirm Kosinski's continued inclusion in this experimental band of writers. Kosinski is a storyteller, a spinner of tales. The final lyrical passages of *Passion Play* confirm his position. In the broad sense, American fiction is dominantly concerned with raw physical sensation hardly ever redeemed by ideas; Kosinski's fiction, however, is pre-eminently moral and primarily philosophical. He belongs to the tradition of classic European moder-

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nism, a tradition in which ideas are as important as physical sensation.

Kosinski's sixth novel, *Blind Date*, is solidly in this classic tradition. *Blind Date* is a redirection of the previous concerns of his earlier fiction: here the modern character George Levanter is engaged in the Socratic quest—one's obligation to examine and assume responsibility for *one's own* actions regardless of the societal framework in which they occur. To Levanter, life is composed of moments, each one commencing with one's awareness of its beginning. Woven into the texture of this novel is the scientific postulate drawn from the philosophical work of Jacques Monod in his notable study, *Chance and Necessity* (1970). The scientific discoveries of Monod and other biologists led him to postulate that there is no plan in nature, that destiny is written concurrently with each event in life, not prior to it, and that to guard against this powerful feeling of destiny should be the source of our new morality. On this point, Kosinski has commented that this philosophy, "derived from and based on modern science, presupposes an ethic which bases moral responsibility upon that very freedom of choice an individual exercises in each instance of his life, an instance being dictated entirely by Chance, and not by Necessity."

In *Blind Date*, Kosinski is true to his position as an adversary novelist and true to the tradition of philosophical fiction. One evening while dining in New York City—at the Il Pescatore Veneto—an enthusiastic discussion developed at the table immediately behind Kosinski. It was post-Christmas and the MLA was holding its annual convention in town. The discussion concerned Kosinski; a particularly ungenerous critique of him and his work was in full development, featuring the dire pronouncement that as an artist Kosinski had sold out. Feeling that he could not, in honor, eavesdrop on the conversation, Kosinski got up and introduced himself to the four gentlemen at the other table. Their reaction was a blank stare: they did not believe Kosinski was Kosinski. They thought he was an imposter, a fiction intruding upon their discussion of fiction. They remained unconvinced. It was a miniature Pirandellian episode—an ironic affirmation of chance and the blurred distinctions of fiction and reality—the constant issue of Kosinski's novels, the philosophic presence which informs his work.

* * *

The negative charges against Kosinski's fiction have been numerous. The most insistent tend to dismiss the brutal reality, the terrain of violence and vengeance, which is the pervading atmosphere of works like *Steps* or *Cockpit*. Is it merely a macabre "make-believe" or an omnipresence in human existence? One critic has complained that "the novels are no longer derived from life in combination with the genius of invention, but they are derived from the clichés of popular culture itself." As an expertly trained sociologist, Kosinski responds that nothing in his fiction cannot be substantiated in the daily national newspapers. Behind each novel is a weight of threefold documentation far in excess of the narrative event. In *Passion Play*, for example, Kosinski maintains that every major city in the country has a chain of sex parlors akin to the Dream Exchange of his novel. Still, one reviewer in the Midwest charged that *Passion Play* was exploiting the issue outside of "mainstream sex." What is "mainstream sex"? But sexual explicitness is only one aspect of the negative charges, and no useful point can be served by a recital of the many and varied accusations against the fictional reality of the novels. In an interview in *U.S. News and World Report*, Kosinski says forthrightly: "I see myself as an adversary novelist whose role is to confront—not to escape from—life's threatening encounters. There is nothing in all my novels that can't take place in these United States in the very city block in which so many of us live."

In an oblique way, Kosinski is answering his critics through the alter-ego character of Fabian, the hero of *Passion Play*. Like his creator, Fabian too is a writer. He writes about the controlled danger of polo, a collision sport which demands a keen, almost intuitive, knowledge of horses. Fabian's books are not widely popular, not only because they lack illustrations, but because they are "manuals for safety" in a high-risk game. His works, *Obstacles* and *Prone to Fall*, are not about the glories of victories, but about the real impediments and wayward ability of the inexpert horseman to tumble from his mount. Fabian says, "If you have many accidents, you're not an expert." It is accidents which spoil sport, not books about accidents. In his books, Fabian has tried to confront the reality of danger that exists in the collisions of the game. The horseman must know and understand the nature and the spirit of the game he plays. In a similar way, Kosinski's novels have been "manuals of safety" in the game of life itself. "To read a novel," he has said, "is to practice for real life." In his own judgment, he has suffered a critical repudiation because of his insistent refusal to paint a more comforting reality for the reader.

* * *

Kosinski is a master of disguise and few questions ever pierce the surface of his personal charm, except on those rare occasions when he willingly assesses the contemporary literary scene. His voice achieves the open edge of irritation at what seems like an amorphous and invisible opponent—namely, a hopelessly sentimental approach to fiction. "According to this canon," he writes, "a novel should gently titillate the reader. A literary *wunderkind* who annoys or intimidates the reader is not easily accepted. Such a writer must never attempt to vandalize the mental furniture of the sentimental-oriented reader." In essence, the real crux of the matter is that the reader must always feel that a work of fiction was written *for him*, not against him. Kosinski has labeled this brand of literary psychology the Fiddler-on-the-Roof approach. It feeds the collective tribal ego a native diet of fast foods. Clearly, Kosinski's novels are not a part of the staple trade of "consensus" fiction. Kosinski's fiction has a totally different integrity, but like all fiction it is a very democratic form for the conveyance of ideas. Given this democratic admission, the reader must ultimately: "Take it or leave it. Project yourself into this situation or not." In the best sense, Kosinski's vision is one of great energy, great vitality. His novels are a vivid portrait of endangered man, and if the climate for these "manuals for safety" has been sentimentalized, he remains faithful to an adversary vision—to stand against the flood of consensus. His fiction is a meditation on the evolution of an actualized self. The protagonist remains in an eternal conflict with the collective forces of the social order. —*Daniel J. Cahill*

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Brief Fiction Reviews

To Recollect a Cloud of Ghosts, by George Garrett. Palaemon Press. $20.

This is a wonderful book—quite literally, full of wonder. The occasion is Christmas in England, 1602-1603. The narrative begins its fine curve through the countryside from London, when an annual procession moves to the vast palace and grounds of Whitehall. As Queen Elizabeth I comes home, so does the season: the candles and flowers, Yule Log, fire and light and evergreens, rich cloths and tapestries, the Lords and Ladies of the Court. But this Christmas is to be the last for the aged Queen, and for the ghosts of her memory.

All the rituals of the season are observed. The dances are danced; the poems read; the supper eaten. Then Elizabeth is presented with her New Year's gifts—the treasure at the center of the story.

Garrett renders the jeweled lists of gifts in perfect counterpoint with memories of the "great and the powerful, the fortunate and privileged and celebrated." But also the soft and weak, the faithless.

Memories cloud the Court. The young women who attend the Queen can't understand or even believe in the nasty old woman and her dreams. They are dreamers of the future, who care nothing for these "lost names and the old portraits of her forgotten suitors of one time and another." But Elizabeth is wiser than they are.

She paid for many of the gifts herself. She was not universally loved. Yet she is still the necessary cameo center of this yearly celebration, where there is (still) mystery: of change, of death, this year certainly, but also of her people's need to believe and to hold sacred. Of the necessity of faith.

> [She believed] that the future, whether good or ill, belonged to God alone and could be no more examined and questioned than Gold Almighty can be. Believed therefore that in this world doubt alone is the appropriate and accurate posture towards the future. Believed, then, all the more firmly because of the depth of her doubts, that faith alone is the accurate and appropriate response to what must be, can only be, doubted.

They are all, except the Queen herself, hostage to the future.

The Queen retires; the narrative curves away. To the servants and Lords and Ladies, who worry over the next reign. To the great men of the City, the men of the Guilds, who sing and dance to the music of change. To the countryside.

For now, Christmastide has been kept in England. "According to old traditions and customs. Which, since they solve no riddles of the past nor answer any questions put to the future, must be, then, old or new, wholly of the present, only of the here and now. . . . Thus we celebrate our own joy and folly, our own vision and our ignorance." As, in its striking final image, this story celebrates them.

The book is beautifully printed and bound with green cloth on boards, red end papers. It is issued in a limited edition of 250 unnumbered copies, signed by the author. Palaemon Press Limited publishes collectors' editions of Southern writers. Their work is excellent.

Banquet, Short stories by Rosellen Brown, Maxine Kumin, Jean McGarry, Joyce Carol Oates, Lynne Sharon Schwartz. Edited by Joan Norris. Wood Engravings by Gillian Tyler. Penmaen Press. $12.; $4. (paper).

It was fashionable around the middle Seventies to blame women writers for repeating certain themes. Woman leaves husband and finds self. Woman finds self and leaves husband. Woman goes mad and finds self. Housework is dangerous to health. Passivity is also dangerous to health. Sexist society is to be blamed for all problems. Etc.

Fashion, as usual, had tunnel vision and women were always writing on many themes; women were even writing stories and novels with male protagonists. Which might surprise some people.

Banquet is another collection to add to the expanding library of collections of short stories by writers who happen to be women. The stories are excellent, diverse, and bow to no fashion but quality.

Joyce Carol Oates, "North Wind": A woman's life is permanently redirected after months of harassment from an anonymous, obscene phone caller.

Maxine Kumin, "The Banquet": A recently divorced woman forms a sudden and remarkably honest friendship with another woman, but learns that honesty is a house of mirrors.

Rosellen Brown, "How Mrs. Fox Married Again": The real (and ironic, and funny, and sad) story of how a Senator's wife finds herself a new husband while the Senator is dying.

Jean McGarry, "The Rainy Season": A man and woman, both trapped, turn to each other in a world of ordinary detail as intense and exact as an American primitive painting.

Lynne Sharon Schwartz, "Mrs. Saunders Writes to the World": A widow paints her name all over an apartment complex, but finally sees her identity as one she's chosen, and knows the reason for her choice.

Although this book is manifestly female (etchings and editing also done by women), the fiction is strongly universal, which is probably the whole point. That women can

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produce banquets other than five course holiday dinners, or kids' birthday cakes. That they are not, as Kumin's protagonist discovers, traditional meals. "Among the white napery and heavy silver I felt as though I had stumbled on a banquet conducted by cannibals and having been served, say, the thigh-bone of my daughter, was sentenced to gnaw on it to the end."

Rehearse & the Grandmother Story, by Lynn Watson. Calliopea Press. $2.50.

Rehearse & The Grandmother Story is a hand-set and -printed chapbook with decorative endpapers inspired by an early 1900s wallpaper design. It came out in an edition of 300. These two very short stories are, unfortunately, not up to their attractive presentation.

Watson writes an imagistic, free associative prose that at its worst slips free of meaning, as if meaning were a noose. (But meaning isn't: it's why we read.) She asks the reader to grant certain ungrantable metaphors: "I'm eating cereal out of a two-way door . . . "; "[I] can naturalize myself into any situation and melt like a piece of the wind." The images come too quickly and break free too utterly—there's a tension in the reading that could work *for* the prose, but that with so many random associations works mostly against it. The metaphoric language here is unattached to any unifying vision, and is barely fixed to a single narrative line; the result is plain confusion. At best, Watson can make an observation like this one: "[Every Grandmother has] one mystery that the grown-ups always tip-toe past, as if a baby were sleeping, or someone was sick." This line is clear and somewhat resonant—qualities very much needed throughout.

Conversion, by Kelly Cherry. Drawings by Jamie E. Murphy. The Treacle Story Series 8, Treacle Press, $2.50.

The first time I read *Conversion*, I made notes like this:

Story takes on a big theme in only twenty pages. A woman is troubled by history and her place in it, not just personal history but also history genetic, religious, psychic, mythic, and social. This woman desires to unite all the parts of her experience, and even the experience of the race. " . . . her glory would shine more shatteringly than even Michaelangelo had envisioned, because he was not what she was, a woman with a womb spacious enough to sculpt a universe in." This woman, understandably, finds herself a somewhat inadequate vessel. She has desired nothing less than to give birth to God. Theme simply eludes expression in such a small space—despite the special ability of the short story to speak briefly on long subjects.

The second time, I found the thread of the plot:

Woman returns to the apartment of a poet she has spent the previous night with, one David Moss. She's just ended a three year marriage with a Jew named Ezra. Moss reminds her of Ezra. After a stilted conversation, they make love.

And the style:

Cerebral, anxious writing, building considerable abstraction on slim plot line. Making poetry as well; rhythmic, insistent language, but with a few clunks. Example: "She would set his house on fire, see him go up in smoke, his bones eaten through along the grain like ripped seams, and with her skirts tucked between her knees, she'd wade in the marrow no more confined to its natural course." Conversion of the title happens in the act of love-making, with an acceptance of momentary and imperfect union. Story strives nobly (just as its main character does) but fails; needs longer narrative, more action, less abstraction, more space in which to move.

Kelly Cherry has published two novels, *Sick and Full of Burning*, and *Augusta Played*, and two books of poetry. She's a good writer, and one might hope she'd speak longer on this long subject in the future.

–Mary Peterson

Publishers' addresses for books reviewed:

Calliopea Press, Missoula, MT
Palaemon Press Limited, Box 7527, Reynolda Station, Winston-Salem, NC 27109
Penmaen Press, Ltd., Old Sudbury Road, Lincoln, MA 01773
Treacle Press, P.O. Box 638, New Paltz, NY 12561

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Brief Poetry Notices

Praise, by Robert Hass. Ecco. $7.95.

☆☆☆☆

Richly meditative poetry which ponders and embraces the luminous world it is always discovering. Hass is a poet of imaginative intelligence.

Rising and Falling, by William Matthews, Little, Brown. $4.95 (paper).

☆☆☆☆

A marvelous third book which reminds us that the poet is first and last a maker of language. Nothing is incidental in the hands of this skilled exegete of the existential.

The Lifeguard in the Snow, by Eugene Ruggles. Pittsburgh. $6.95; $2.95 (paper).

☆☆

Sincere, derivative verse assembled at the house of Bly and Wright. This is poetry that means well; one wishes it meant more.

Border Crossings, by Greg Pape. Pittsburgh. $6.95; $2.95 (paper).

☆☆☆

Levinean lineage and language mark this even, forthright, elegiac verse which lacks the resonant silence, the raw undercurrent of violence, found in the master.

Box Poems, by Willa Schneberg.

☆ ☆

Old Sheets, by Larkin Warren.

☆ ☆ ☆

Alicejames Books. $3.95 (paper)

Schneberg's poems are unpleasant, overloaded with medical and sexual deviations, couched in lines clear but not particularly poetical. Warren's on the other hand are shrewd and funny angles on love and family and loss. Why two poets in a single book? They disserve each other.

Sunday, by Thomas Lux. Houghton Mifflin (New Poetry Series). $8.95; $4.95 (paper).

☆ ☆ ½

Cozy-up poems, with a first-person narrator the reader is supposed to like, relate to, smile with. It doesn't work, especially when the "I" gets frantic with images—not surreal, exactly; just overblown and showoffish.

The Rainbow Grocery, by William Dickey. Massachusetts. $7.00; $3.95 (paper).

☆☆

Though Dickey acts as if he were cleverer than he is, his poems are indeed successful when he is less confessional—when postures and pretenses, not present consciousness, are his *modus operandi.*

Out of the Desert, by Diane Levenberg. Doubleday. $7.95.

☆

Restless and breathless, this jog through Jewishness enjambs so fast one comes away empty headed. Levenberg could scale Zion, no doubt; only a reader with a persecution complex would want to accompany her.

New Rivers Press, 1602 Selby Avenue, St. Paul, MN 55104
Alicejamesbooks, 138 Mt. Auburn Street, Cambridge, MA 02138
Graywolf Press, P.O. Box 142, Port Townsend, WA 98368

Room for Error, by Charles Martin. Georgia. $7.50.

☆☆☆

Beautiful material, good construction, sound lines and elegance of detail characterize these poems which hang just right. Whether one wishes, like Martin, to be seemly at each buttonhole and lapel instead of walking naked in the enterprise is another matter. À *chacun son gout.*

Reeds, by Gibbons Ruark. Texas Tech (Associated Writing Programs' Series for Contemporary Poetry). $5.95; $2.95 (paper).

☆☆☆

Plangent water music rises from this volume devoted to family and travel, the tone as natural and melodic as its title.

Permission to Speak, by Steve Orlen. Wesleyan. $3.45.

☆☆☆☆

The calm of good composition marks these painterly poems whose pigments are laid on directly from the tube or with the edge of the knife itself.

Wilderness, by Peter Wild. New Rivers. $3. (paper).

☆ ☆ ☆

A poet both prolific and unusually elegant of voice. Wild favors a long line, a reassuring stride in these pieces partly domestic, partly rustic. Drawings by Hannah Hinchman.

Selected Poems, by Donald Justice. Atheneum. $10.95.

☆ ☆ ☆ ☆

For those who realize how little justice there *is* in this world, we endorse this book—new poems and a sampling of the three earlier collections. The world will seem fairer.

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Goshawk, Antelope, by Dave Smith. Illinois. $3.95.

☆☆☆☆

Unashamed to speak of the big themes, the great abstractions, and to call them by their rightful names, these relentless narrative poems sometimes come close to speaking in tongues.

Repairs, by G.E. Murray. Missouri (Breakthrough Series). N.P.S.

☆ ☆ ☆

A rich first collection. Not every poem rises above journalism, but enough are buoyed up by their streetwise conceits to make Murray's book a considerable pleasure.

North Sea, by Mark Jarman. Cleveland State. $3.50 (paper).

☆ ☆ ½

It's difficult here to discover Jarman's voice. Many of the poems are flabby, downright amateurish, but a few—they seem to attend to family matters—oblige us to pay attention.

The Names of a Hare in English, by David Young. Pittsburgh. N.P.S.

☆ ½

Poetry devised (apparently) because the writer felt obliged to it. The business of inventing not only the art but the occasion for it ("I think I'll write a poem about something.") does very little for the reputation of what used to be considered one of life's finer things.

In Broken Country, by David Wagoner. Atlantic-Little, Brown. $5.95 (paper).

☆ ☆ ☆ ☆

As Wagoner endures, he grows. It is not simply that he is outlasting the more faint-hearted poets, but that he learns and polishes—as here, in poems that provide an ecology of nature, art, teaching, and rarely give in to the temptings of the obvious.

Walking Four Ways in the Wind, by John Allman. Princeton. $8.50; $4.50 (paper).

☆☆☆

Technically adept, unaffected and charitable in its depiction of others' lives, this well-edited book harbors nary a weak poem. Allman can only be faulted for writing somewhat too well: one looks in vain for the risks, the magnificent failures one would hope to discover in a first book.

The Venetian Vespers, by Anthony Hecht. Atheneum. $10.

☆ ☆

Reading Hecht is a bit like reading a collaboration between Robert Browning and Ogden Nash, or watching Queen Victoria play Peter Pan. Such grand style, such minor matter.

Under Stars, by Tess Gallagher. Graywolf. $4. (paper).

☆ ☆ ☆ ☆

Poems that *are* poems—about love and the shadows of love, about love's adversities and thefts. Gallagher's language is just *so*, just *right*.

Standing Watch, by Christopher Bursk. Houghton Mifflin (New Poetry Series). $8.95; $4.95 (paper).

☆ ½

Poetry whose lines are so freighted with low-grade images that their thrust is smothered. Told mostly from the vantage of childhood, yet the poems bear no trace of the child's directness and unspoiled visions.

Hatcher, by Ted Kooser. Windflower. $4.95 (paper).

☆ ☆ ☆ ☆

Not a poem book, but a poet book. Kooser's apocryphal hero, Hatcher, is all the deep, lusty, raffish, sensitive, doomed things poets were supposed to be in the days when this book's narrative engravings were considered high art. Rare good fun.

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Ankle-Straps & Other Matters

(A selective view of the '70s)

Before the press screening of "Kramer vs. Kramer," seeing women in the lobby in the stylish ankle-strap shoes and sheer stockings, I think how specifically I remember that style from the 1950s. Doesn't that show how history repeats itself, or should I say, men and women repeat themselves? Stick around long enough, it all comes round again.

This familiar feeling: nostalgia, the past, history . . . I think, well, it's the time for it; I should do the decade "retrospective." But the next NAR will be out when half the year is already gone. Had I been more together I would have done it last time. . . . And then I wouldn't have had the end-of-the-year experience, been audience to the convulsive finale of a decade in which terrorism became the perfect terrible absurdist indiscriminate act. A banger ending it was, the year's end, with hostage-taking and embassy assaults. There were Carter's reascendancy and Kennedy's fall; Russia's arrogant so-called revolution-busting incursion south (about which the United States is at this moment in time—in spite of Chile, Iran, Cambodia, not to mention Viet Nam, and assorted others—very holier than thou). And—what about missing the opening of "Star Trek," "The Black Hole," (Disney Studios' first to be rated R), and certainly "Kramer vs. Kramer" (which, being truthful, was the one I saw)? Ah — the delights, the disasters, deaths, anxieties, the frailties, absurdities and caroling in the rain, the last Christmas of the era!

You either don't have all the information, but you're right on the time, or you come in late freighting everything—right; it balances doesn't it? A selective retrospective. The idea appeals to me. From my Christmas reading it seems to be a thing in long-running departments of long-running magazines. I'm long running—four, five years—half an era indeed—and NAR, since 1815, *INDEED!*

* * *

S-P-E-C-T-A-C-U-L-A-R-S were the kinds of film the '70s ended with, in one genre or another: Comedy ("1941"), Sci-fi, alone or combined with horror ("Star Trek," "The Alien"), Comic-book Modern ("Star Wars"). And, of course, in a genre of its own, the coming, finally, of "Apocalypse Now."

It was in December, Christmas shopping, passing through the paltry book section of one of a chain of fancy California department stores, I spied a largish book, wider than it was high, *The Alien* written on its cover, and below, in smaller type, "A Movie-Novel."

In the beginning of this decade I was teaching and there was always the search for text-books that were interesting; there was the keeping of a file of ideas to propound with students. One of them, back then: a thought I had for a "new" genre of book—an illustrated narrative, the sort of book that would appeal to the sensibilities of "readers" who had spent, perforce or choice, a thousand hours assimilating visual images from a screen—movie or tv. It wasn't really new, of course, what else are "Prince Valiant" and "Flash Gordon"? And in the past novels were often illustrated. But I was seeing the two, words and pictures, working together in a serious way to create a synthesis of the separate experiences of each, something in tune with our post-McLuhan and pre-1984 times.

And all this was partly based on the Grove Press paper-back edition of the film, "*La Guerre est Fini,*" which, because it was a favorite film of mine, I had ordered as a text. That book is a sequence of stills from the film, not titled as they are in most published so-called screenplays, interspersed in different aspect ratios throughout the story narrative. Being that "La Guerre" was closer to the form of a screenplay and had appeared first as a motion picture, it was not exactly what I was thinking of, but it was close. You might have called that edition "a movie novel."

Now, here in 1979 it was so named, and here in 1979 was what it had become: an expensive picture book! It *was* the movie in *stills* from the film with a thin narrative line connecting them. The Super Comic Book, *modern* with the *real* photos.

* * *

In the forward to *Intro 10*, published by Hendel & Reinke, in conjunction with "Associated Writing Programs," Charles Johnson, one of the editors, writes:

> *The artist's business in the Age of Hype is to reaffirm, at the risk of his audience's displeasure, that the only goals worthy of fiction are philosophical and moral ones . . . that the meaning of our experience is each moment, each blink of the eye always in question, and demands the most radical kind of reflection.*

The Age of Hype indeed! There are multiple tie-ins for all these spectacular movies. "Novelization," t-shirts (with or w/o cute/dirty sayings or faces/bodies silk-screened on them), posters, records, and funny hats. It slops over into everything, certainly into the—once, perhaps—more eminent publishing sector.

Johnson is not alone in making these reflections, of course; there has been a lot of this kind of talk around lately. And a lot of it centers around John Gardner's *On Moral Fiction* and its attendant uproar. One contention of Gardner's is that most writers today are detached and abstruse, concerned

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with words as pawns with which to do tricks. And the results of this are books that are intellectual exercises and emotionally zilch—and the result of that is reader turn-off. It should be said about the above that he is referring to the "serious" American writers as distinguished from the popular ones. It's another battle in the old war that I remember first in the furor surrounding the "New Criticism." It's massively complex, not to the point here, and thin ice to skate on.

However, another criticism leveled by Gardner, quoted from the N.Y. *Times* Sunday magazine section (July '79) " . . . as almost all modern art is tinny, commercial, and immoral . . . " does bear a certain focus. For also, in this recent past, has there been much talk of the "commerce" in the publishing world, the concomitant diminution of art. Books are accepted, based on a projection of a sizable return (which includes the prospect of a movie sale), are hyped up and then bid out to the paperbacks like fat cattle, accruing, for the "popular" ones, astronomical prices. It is said by some that "literature" is dying (again). So what is available to be read is mostly pap, carefully designed by both authors and editors to appeal to the widest possible audience.

How familiar (albeit real) this all sounds! With the addition of a couple of zeros to the purchase price, and a couple of million to audience and film rental return, what you have is also the movie business and its so-called poor relation, television. But then it's true that publishing and movies/television, are but two sides of one coin: The Entertainment Business, *A Leisure Time Industry*. They are in fact, sometimes, brothers in the same conglomerate, vying with each other to be big earner. Like Gulf and Western has Paramount & Simon and Shuster, Time/Life has a theatrical motion picture company. And certainly it is true this is *big business*, these spectacular films on which millions are spent—"1941," "Star Trek," "Apocalypse Now"—all, give or take a couple, in the neighborhood of $40 million. That's give or take a couple of million *more or less*. But, what's the difference when you talk in these kinds of figures? It's all abstract anyway.

But the films, naturally—having to bring in 3x to show profit—do not tend to attempt more intellectually than the expected mass audience can assimilate. Statistically that audience is now between 12 and 21, and brings with it the bonanza for the business, what's called the "repeat viewing phenomenon"—which is one person seeing one picture up to six or eight times. Whatever message there is has got a lot of sugar around it to make it sweet going down. Commerce!

The lead *Variety* story (Aug. 22, 1979) headlined: "HIGH ROLLING FRENZY GRIPS H'WOOD." It was slugged: "$15 Mil Budgets Common, Some Climbing As High As $30-40 Mil Negative Cost." But the opening lines sound the caution: that it's "an ominous trend the likes of which was last seen in the industry exactly 10 years ago." The story goes on to point out that in 1969 four pictures went over $10 million and 11 others approached it; but then, two years later in 1971-2, having been hit by heavy losses, the studios retrenched. It was not until '77 that budgets on two or three pictures a year began to approach the old high-water mark again. It should be noted also that due to the inflation in the intervening years, what was $10 million in '69 would be roughly $25 million today.

What *is* different today is that so far, apparently, the big films are appealing to the audience, and they are *(who can imagine seeing one of those six or eight times?)* bringing home the film rental bacon. And what is to be remembered about that is, as part of The Megacorp Entertainment Industry, the name of the game is financial return, so second thoughts will quickly appear in the boardroom if the bread doesn't keep coming in. And there's this business about history repeating itself . . . remember those ankle-strap shoes?

For if 1979 was also a new box-office record—as several of the recent past ones have been—an estimated two billion, eight hundred and six million total (half of which goes to Film Rentals—which is the producers' take), it is due to 7% ticket inflation, not increased admissions. Factored in, this would mean the year was down about 2 ½%.

In 1969 the domestic film B.O. was one billion, two hundred and ninety five million, and there were nine hundred and twelve million admissions. The estimated total for 1979 is one billion, one hundred and twenty million, an increase of 23%. In '69 the average ticket price was $1.42, now the average is $2.50, and that's a jump of 76%, but don't forget friend inflation here too.

As mentioned, 1971 was not a good year—in fact, it was shabby. Then in '72, with Coppola's "The Godfather," there was a soft surge but that flattened out again. In '73 "The Sting" and "The Exorcist" came on, and after that the higher rolling continued pretty well until the end of the decade. But the fact that the present gains are due to inflation and not hard dollars is what gives pause to the pundits—and rise to their caution.

* * *

It's the last five years that have seen produced the top three money-makers of all time: "Jaws," $133+ million; "Grease," $93+ million; and the king of the heap, "Star Wars," with $176 million. In 1970 the all time high roller was "Sound of Music" with $72 million; 10 years later it had dropped to 7th place, surpassed by six others all made in the decade of the '70s. The revered and aged "Gone with the Wind," with a paltry $76 million, and a time span of 40 years, has sunk to 10th on the all time list. And with release only three weeks old, in January Paramount reported that "Star Trek" had already brought in $35 million in film rentals.

Now waiting in the wings is the sequel to champion "Star Wars." This, the second of the five in the series that Lucasfilm is purported to be producing, is "The Empire Strikes Back," due, I think, in the early summer—June, one of the times in the year to release pictures, a big B.O. month. It was reported in *Variety* back *last May* that 20th Century Fox had announced that exhibitor guarantees *then* totalled $26 million, so the picture would open already in "profit."

* * *

And, for the minutia of the end of the era, it was just over eleven years ago that the rating system was imposed under the auspices of the MPAA (the Motion Picture Association). As part of the laundry list of facts it should be registered that in this period of time five thousand and two films have been rated. "R" was accorded to 40% of them; "PG," 38%; "G," 16%; and "X," 6%. The Major-Minor company (a category distinguished in the statistic from

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"the independents") with the most rated releases, 278, or 12% of the total, was United Artists.

It might be *useful* also to know that Farrah Fawcett-Majors, whose career since she left "Charlie's Angels" for the big time feature business has been some stunning posters and some bad movies, has recently fired her business manager. Since leaving the tv show, with its attendant bad press, the lady has not received an offer of work from a major studio; the pictures she's done "came along" so she did them: that's what the ex-business manager said. Unfortunately, to date, the reaction to them is not good. "Somebody Killed Her Husband" and "Sun Burn" are bombs; there is another one, "Saturn 3," to come. At the moment, the ex-business manager went on to opine: Farrah Fawcett is working hard promoting her products for *Fabergé*. Her shampoo is doing better now. But, anyway, when she was with him, she made $18,000,000. Apparently 1979 has not been one of Farrah-Fawcett's good years, either. Having also cast adrift both her husband and her PR firm, she is alone on a cold sea.

And in 1979 in *Variety* was one of those advertisements which are significant in any selective view of the psycho-history of our country in this age, to wit:

$100,000,000
DOMESTIC GROSS
That figure represent what I believe can be achieved if you allow me to present my idea to you. One half hour of your time will permit me to justify my claim that this idea can create the type of box office I have suggested . . .

There is a certain wonder at that sort of paragraph. Reading on you find that he suggests a story (barely) and then goes on to complain that he can't submit it officially because of Writer's Guild rules. That's an old double getting-into-the-movie-business bind—in which is some truth for a fact. He goes on to ask for a job and then, you wonder again, at how he ends.

. . . I would like to say I'm an honest man, not full of greed or deceit. As much as any man can be honest and full of integrity towards his employers, I AM THAT MAN. . . . I swear you will not be disappointed by what I have to offer.
I am, your humble servant.

* * *

The preferred definition (in my dictionary) for the word "era" is "a period of time marked by distinctive character, events, etc." So maybe it's not an era, this past 10 years, maybe it's a disparity, at the beginning of which I had only just arrived in the San Francisco Bay Area, a long term escape from New York City which I left in 1968.

I had been at the San Francisco airport once before that, in transit from Alaska to Hollywood to New York after a film job, but, even back then, an airport was an airport is an airport. What I saw as San Francisco was vintage the early Beat days, Lawrence Ferlinghetti, and his "City Lights" book store in North Beach.

I liked his stuff and I saw *North Beach* as a series of coffee shops with front windows facing on a fog-bound avenue named "North Beach." It ran along an embarcadero, beyond which was the open harbor and then the sea. I saw writers—poets sitting at tables in pea-coats and ship's officer-type caps, discussing the world.

When I got here finally in '69, driving a Land Rover from Kansas, I went to North Beach and found what it really was. Even then, at the height of the Counter Culture in this city which had been a center of it, there was a lot commercial up and down Grant Avenue, along Columbus and Broadway—in the coffee houses and the strip joints (which were just about to, or had just gone "bottomless" too). But Ferlinghetti was here, and is still, and *there* was "City Lights." But the place was only an enclave in the midst of scramble and I guess I'm looking for those discussions in those coffee houses opening on a foggy "North Beach" still.

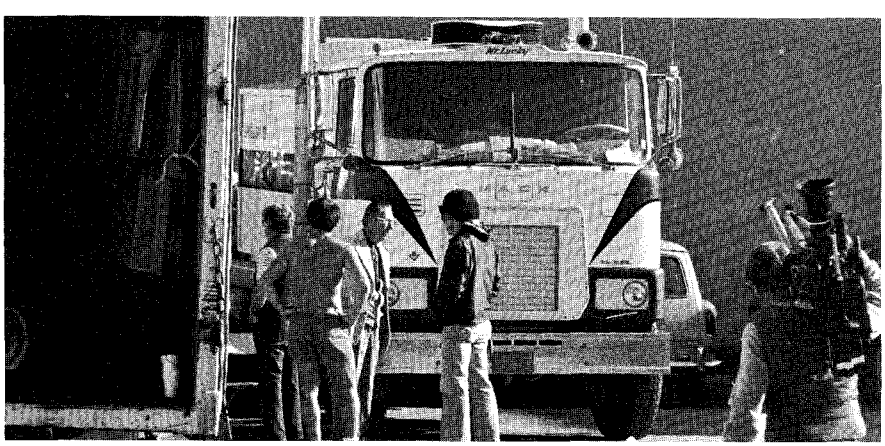
* * *

My dog and I came here in '69 to production manage the movie "THX-1138," George Lucas' first feature, being produced by Francis Coppola's "radical" and "innovative" counter-Hollywood production studio, American Zoetrope. I had dropped out of the movie business forever—I thought—when I left New York, had been teaching in Kansas the year before. I came to do "THX" because it was offered in an interim period, and I was intrigued by the challenge of putting together a really efficient unit, a small crew, to make a movie for a good price. That, Francis said *then,* was what American Zoetrope was all about—small, efficient, personal films. In those days low budget was under one million, today it's three to five. And today Francis Coppola's Omni-Zoetrope and United Artists have released "Apocalypse Now" which cost, give or take, $40,000,000.

After "THX" was finished shooting I expected to (and did) go back to teaching. And after it was finished I was convinced that movie making *was* better left behind, as I had said when I left New York the two years before. It's also true that at the time I was beginning to drift seriously from my moorings. In the long run that proved to be a good thing; in fact, there's some who say that flipping out is the only way to get to the bottom, and you have to get there before you can put it back the right way. So—it took some time to do that, and meanwhile, in between, several of the '70s early years were not a good thing.

* * *

I was teaching and going crazy, and maybe that made the teaching better; those were crazy passionate years. Then came 1970, and several terrible things: Nixon's Cambodian venture, which sparked the killing of the students at Kent State, which sparked what I remember as the last major campus demonstration, a nationwide student strike. After that there were student killings at Jackson



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State, and then there was the Kissinger/CIA venture into the internal affairs of Chile, and with Nixon's idea of a super intelligence agency, the sowing of the seeds that would lead eventually to Watergate.

And, after it, the campus seemed to change. At San Francisco State the students had already been beaten when S.I. Hayakawa (now the sleeping senator from California), wearing his tam, climbed on the sound truck and sounded the war cry of the establishment: *Law and Order! Turn loose the dogs!*

When I first got there I saw a movie made by some film students. The lines of policemen—the Tac Squad, with face masks, shields, long billy clubs, and tear gas. Viciously they used their own kind of disorder to restore order. I kept hearing back then that I should have been at State before "the strike." They said that's when State was *a college* to be teaching in.

(The other night Megan said, "I was at Columbia then, and Mark Rudd shut it down—where is he now?")

* * *

I remember going to Sam Peckinpah's "Straw Dogs" in 1971. I had been half-way offered and turned down a job on his "The Wild Bunch" which was, in many ways, a spectacular film. It was also, as I heard afterwards, a very difficult film in the making. Peckinpah was always a rebel in some way; he was not above being angry and unreasonable on the set. But he damn well did some good work too. "Ride the High Country" (1961) is another spectacular film.

Anyway, before I went to "Straw Dogs" I had been alerted that it was a super violent film, and I was (and generally still am) against explicit/exploitive violence in movies. Apalled I was when I went; I walked out, I think. But, a week or so ago I had the opportunity to see the picture again, courtesy of television, and of course I saw it with different eyes, a different picture. Sure the beginnings of his excess, the obsession with violence (made even more abstract by his style of shooting it in slow motion), was all there. The script correlatives are so fixed, leaving out any ambiguity, that the film is a kind of parody; but, still and all, the power and technique of a fine director are there too.

What has happened to the man in our past decade is a movie disease that results in one kind or another of self-destruction. I remember Peckinpah slumped in his chair, on the stage at the San Francisco Film Festival in 1974; I wrote about him then. Ahh—these last years have not been good for the man. His picture, "Convoy," in 1979, was made more awful and self-conscious by the flashes in it, here and there, now and then, of the power that is now gone. A piece of p.r. pap passed to the press at the "Convoy" preview, courtesy of United Artists, was a "quick reference guide to C.B. jargon," the alternative argot of the just past age.

And it does seem, these days, that . . . *the bears are wall to wall–you gotta copy?* . . . *we gone, Good Buddy* . . . *bye* . . . *KACA eight five oh nine–on the side*.

* * *

Since "Apocalypse" opened there has been one after another of articles about and interviews with Francis Coppola, and he keeps talking about the moral prerogatives of his war movie—which three veterans of the war (quoted in the Sunday Magazine of the S.F. Chronicle/Examiner, 12/9/79) have seen as a rip-off of it—and behind that talk the pious presumption that he is *the* sensitive director to have tackled evil below the knees.

It has been a strange era, ending with this convulsion that twists the United States on nails of its own driving, and the rest of the world too. Rust never sleeps. Meantime Steve McQueen for god's sake won't even read a script before a commitment is made for *him* for the sum of $5 million up front, against 15% of the domestic distributor gross and 15% of the overseas take! How many $5 millions does it take to be enough? And what do you do with it?—it takes time to spend or invest that kind of money—it takes up time from living really—no?

* * *

Elizabeth Ashley is an actress who had a breakdown in the '60s, and has rebuilt herself and her career. She is also a woman who has strong political convictions, and has acted on them; she was hurt in the demonstrations and Chicago "police riot" at the Democratic Convention in '68.

"It's a great myth," she said, talking about what kinds of movies she had offers to be in, "that talented people are very much in control of what they do. There just aren't that many movies made. That's the state of the business. And television you can't even discuss because it's run by congenital fools. Basically nothing runs it but a computer that's gone amok.

"But the most alarming thing about the business is the corporate takeover. These international megacorps that buy what they call entertainment industries as tax shelters. Give me the old studio moguls any day before these three-piece-suited, attaché-case-carrying, wimping, whining fools who have utter contempt for the audience. And they are totally isolated from the audience. I've had many, many television executives tell me, 'Well, I don't watch that garbage. I wouldn't watch that. That's what *they* watch.' The hicks in the boonies. The great unwashed. But actors have to live, so the content of television has nothing to do with the actors.

"The only thing an artist should ever shoot for is that covenant with the people, the audience. They're the only ones that we owe anything to . . . because the audience is never wrong. And the only weapon an artist has against this system is this audience constituency."

* * *

In the movie reviews in *Variety* they mention when it is an art film, and because of that, generally, they say, it will have "limited legs." There is something wrong in the movie business with talking about *Art–Entertainment* is the word and more and more is spent to attract a big and bigger audience—and perhaps the people are ready for that, to sink back into an illusion to mask the trauma of the time; perhaps—

I have read that in the coming age when there is no more oil, and the decentralized businesses of America have to centralize in local areas and shrink because transportation costs will have gone out of sight, then there won't be any more conglomerates. They will disappear—and literature and film will be back to small-timing it, appealing to a selective audience—because the mass one will be gone. Is this the '80s—the neighborhood theatre down the block, the home video big screen, reading books, or what? Well—we'll wait and see. Hopefully, we'll have time to wait and something left to see.

–Lawrence Sturhahn

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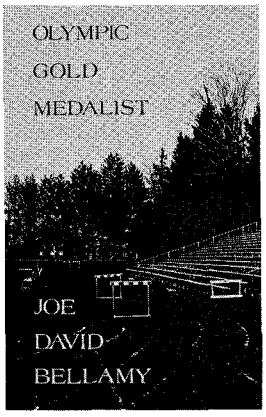

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A posthumous collection. The book's premise—that we must learn the disturbing complexities of the world before we can presume to express ourselves—may have kept the poet from a timelier sharing of his talents. Sent postpaid. Cover by James Buckels. 48p.

The Melissa & McGonnegal Poster: $3.00

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from "On Location in Montana":

A woman near me gnashes her teeth, groans, and keels over in a fit of epilepsy. The nurse and Cimino are at her side in seconds.
"That's a cut. We'll go again."

from "A Death in the Glitter Palace":

When I came by the nursing station to check her chart, one of the nurses, not Maureen, told me Cha Nan had just died.
"That's good," I said.

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